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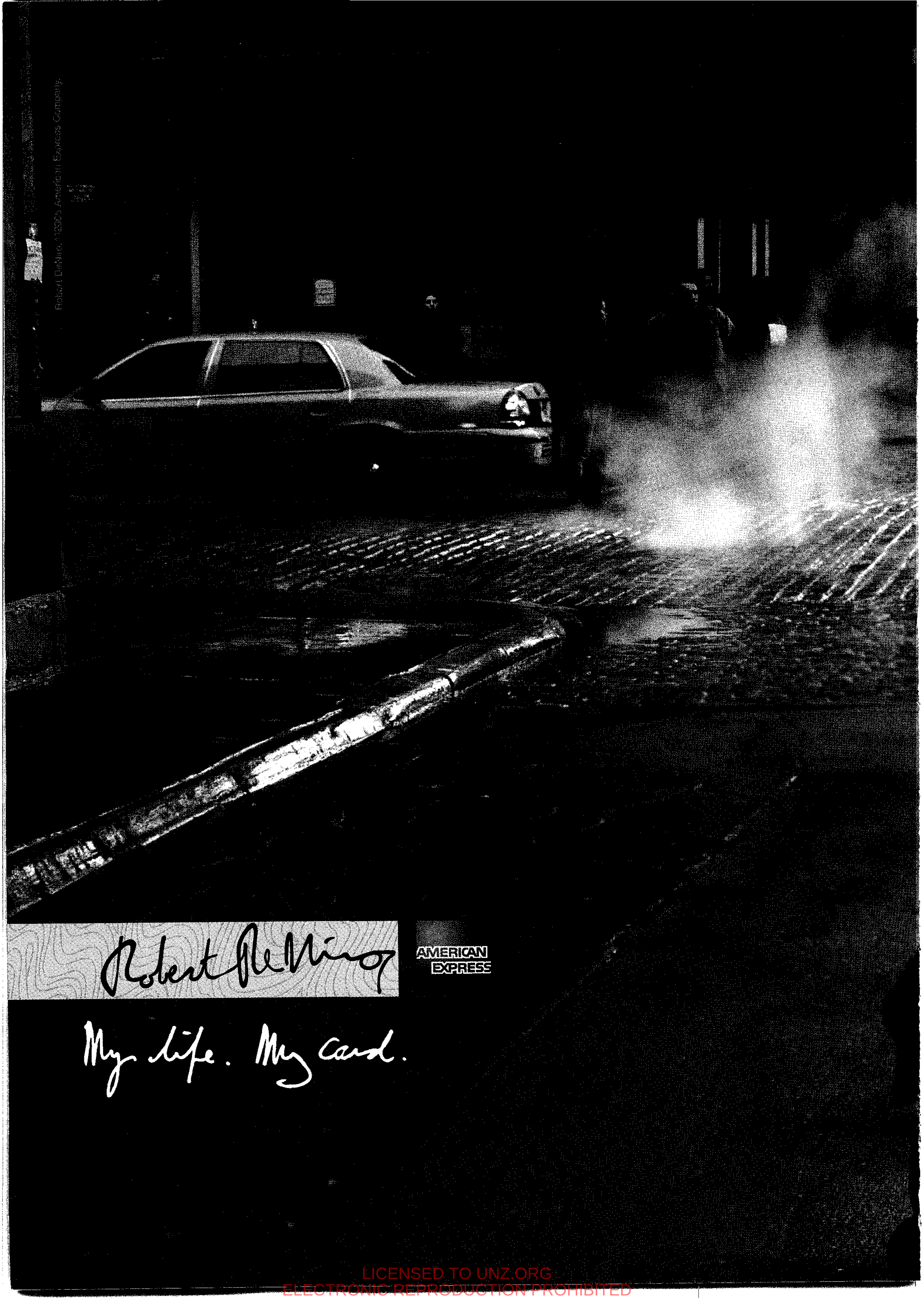
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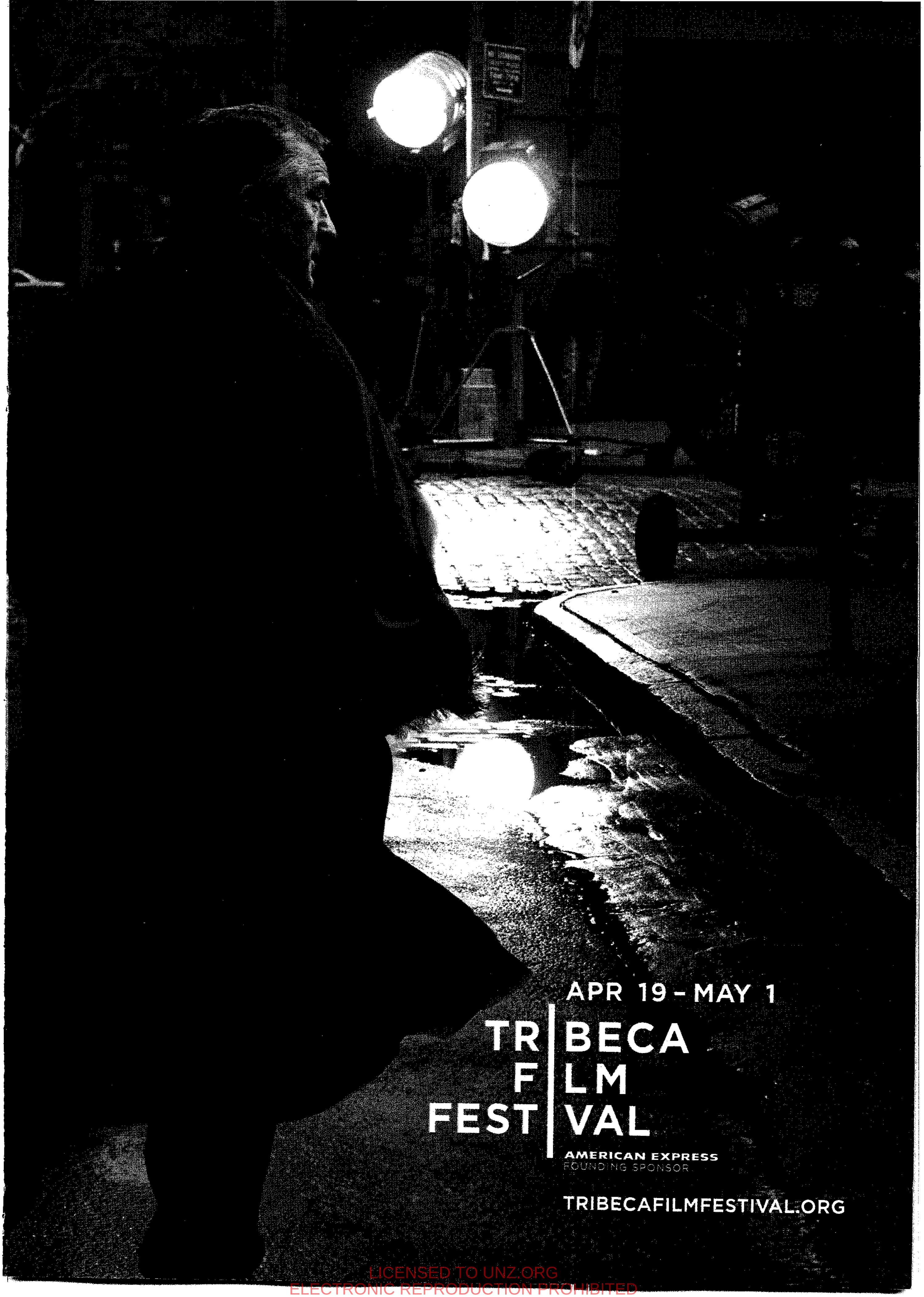
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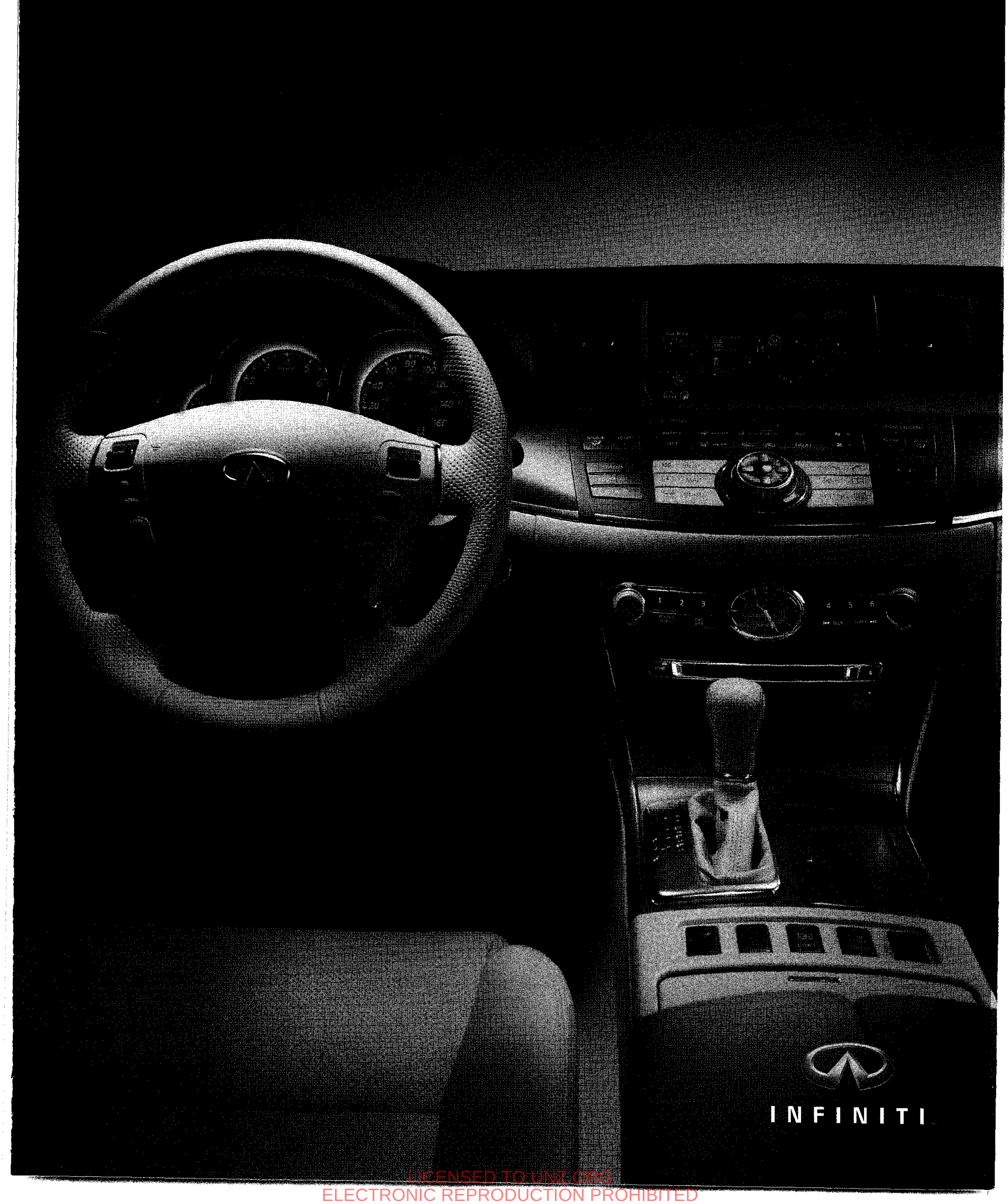

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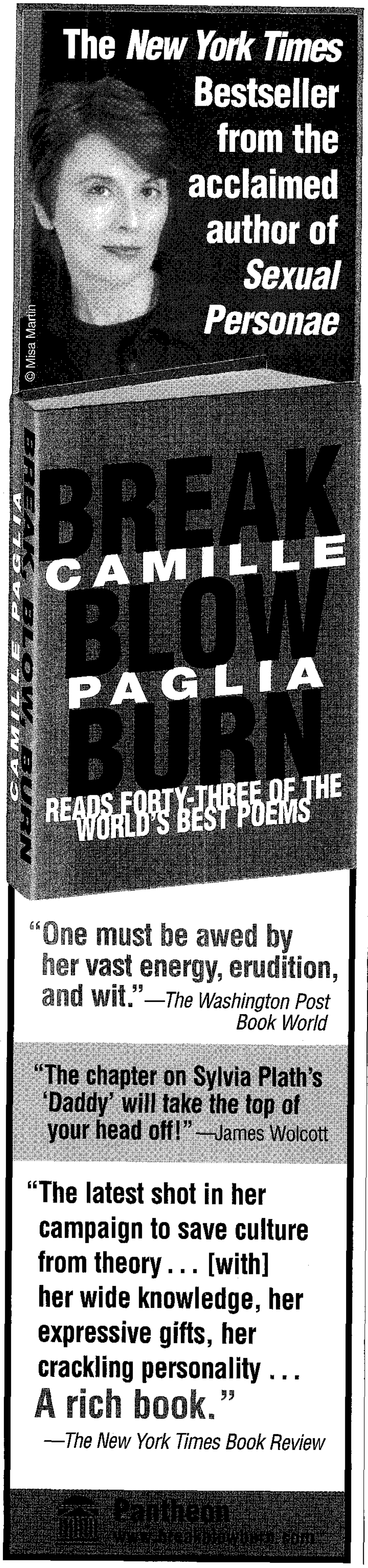
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CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Kolbert ("The Climate of Man—I," p. 56) is a political correspondent for the magazine and the author of "The Prophet of Love: And Other Tales of Power and Deceit."

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Rebecca Mead ("Mr. Brooklyn," p. 40) has been writing for the magazine since 1997.

Michael Shapiro (The Talk of the Town, p. 38) is the author of "The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, the Dodgers, and Their Final Pennant Race Together."

Paul Rudnick (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 47) is a regular contributor of humor pieces.

Lillian Ross (The Talk of the Town, p. 34) is a longtime staff writer. Her book "Reporting Back: Notes on Journalism" is available in paperback.

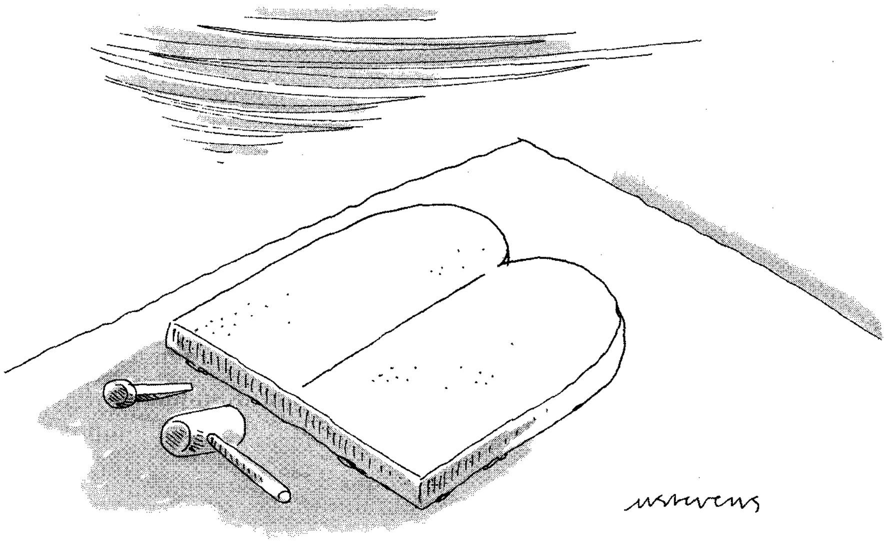
Philip Roth ("I Got a Scheme!," p. 72), is the author of twenty-five novels, including, most recently, "The Plot Against America." Saul Bellow died on April 5th, at the age of eighty-nine.

Ian Frazier ("Invaders," p. 48) has been writing for *The New Yorker* since 1974. A collection of his pieces about New York City, "Gone to New York," will come out in November.

Robert Hass (Poem, p. 77) has published four poetry collections, including "Sun Under Wood." He also translated, with the author, Czeslaw Milosz's last collection, "Second Space: New Poems."

Adam Gopnik (Books, p. 90), a staff writer, is the recipient of the 2005 National Magazine Award for Reviews and Criticism. He is the author of "Paris to the Moon."

Istvan Banyai (Cover) has a new children's book, "The Other Side," coming out in September. ♦



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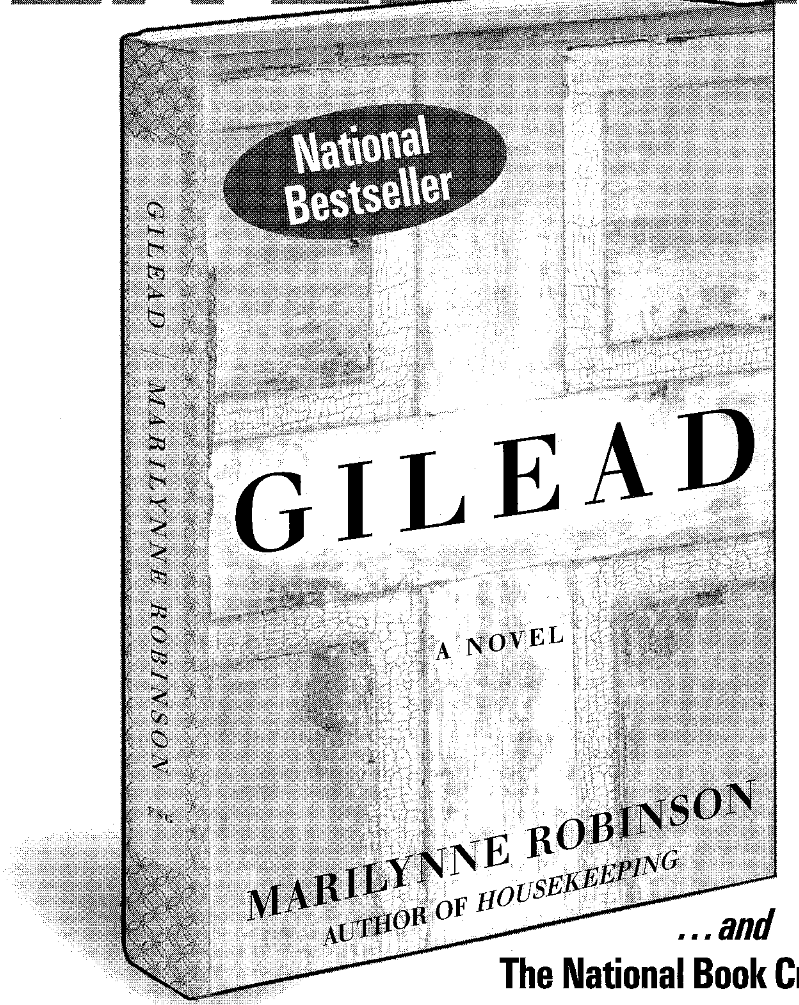

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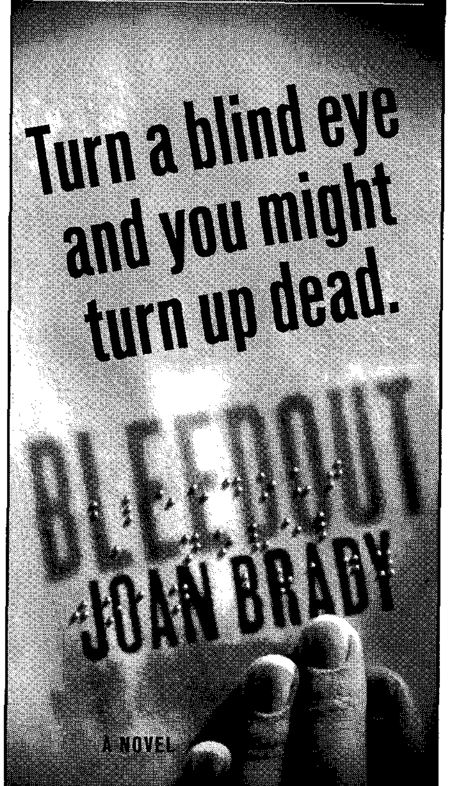

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A MATTER OF OPINION

Margaret Talbot's article on Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia emphasizes his fanatical dedication to intellectual consistency and judicial process ("Supreme Confidence," March 28th). The extremes to which this can lead are evident in an obiter dictum that he delivered in Herrera v. Collins, a 1993 case brought by a man who claimed that he had been unjustly convicted of murder. "There is no basis in text, tradition, or even in contemporary practice," Scalia wrote, "for finding in the Constitution a right to demand judicial consideration of newly discovered evidence of innocence brought forward after conviction." (Clarence Thomas concurred.) In the meantime, more than a hundred convicts have been exonerated through DNA testing. Intellectual consistency is a fine thing, but perhaps justice and life are even more important.

C. W. Griffin
Phoenix, Ariz.

Talbot observes that, in 1986, Justice Scalia "sailed through his confirmation hearings unopposed." That smooth voyage is a cautionary tale. President Reagan's nomination of Scalia was paired with the elevation of William Rehnquist to Chief Justice. The media, interest groups, and the Senate were consumed with the heated debate over the Rehnquist nomination. By the time the Senate finally got around to Scalia, everyone was worn out and distracted. Scalia declined to answer whether he would overturn Roe v. Wade, but he assured the senators that he had "no agenda." The record suggests otherwise. Once on the Court, Scalia used the first opportunity—and has used every one since—to argue for overturning Roe. Rather than acting as a consensus-builder, as Talbot notes, he has been one of the most divisive members of the Court, saving some of his most blistering attacks for his Roe dissents. Scalia is, of course, entitled to be a scathing critic of Roe and a vigorous champion of originalism. But the public is entitled to know such deeply held convictions before a Justice is confirmed.

Nancy Northup
President, Center for Reproductive Rights
New York City

It is important to understand that originalists do not follow the meaning of the Constitution and give primacy to its language merely because they are hidebound or obsessed with semantics. Current strands of originalism aspire to reach an interpretation that is traceable to a legislative decision made by a democratic majority, and, in so doing, to respect the objective evidence of that decision prescribed by the Constitution itself. Contrary to popular conception, some originalists happily consult legislative history if the words of a provision are ambiguous. By contrast, the "living Constitution" approach does neither. It seeks openly to supplant the democratic choices that the Constitution and other legislation represent with the subjective views of a small number of judges.

Arthur G. Sapper
Silver Spring, Md.

Talbot mentions that Scalia attends a parish where a Latin Mass is celebrated, "contrary to Vatican II reforms." However, Vatican II, in establishing a new liturgy for the Mass, in fact permitted the Mass to be celebrated either in Latin or in a vernacular language. Many parishes throughout the world offer at least one Latin Mass on Sundays among their services. Furthermore, those who prefer to celebrate the previous Latin liturgy (known as the Tridentine Mass, after the sixteenth-century Council of Trent) may still do so, provided that they obtain the permission of their local bishop.

W. E. Higgins
Maplewood, N.J.

•

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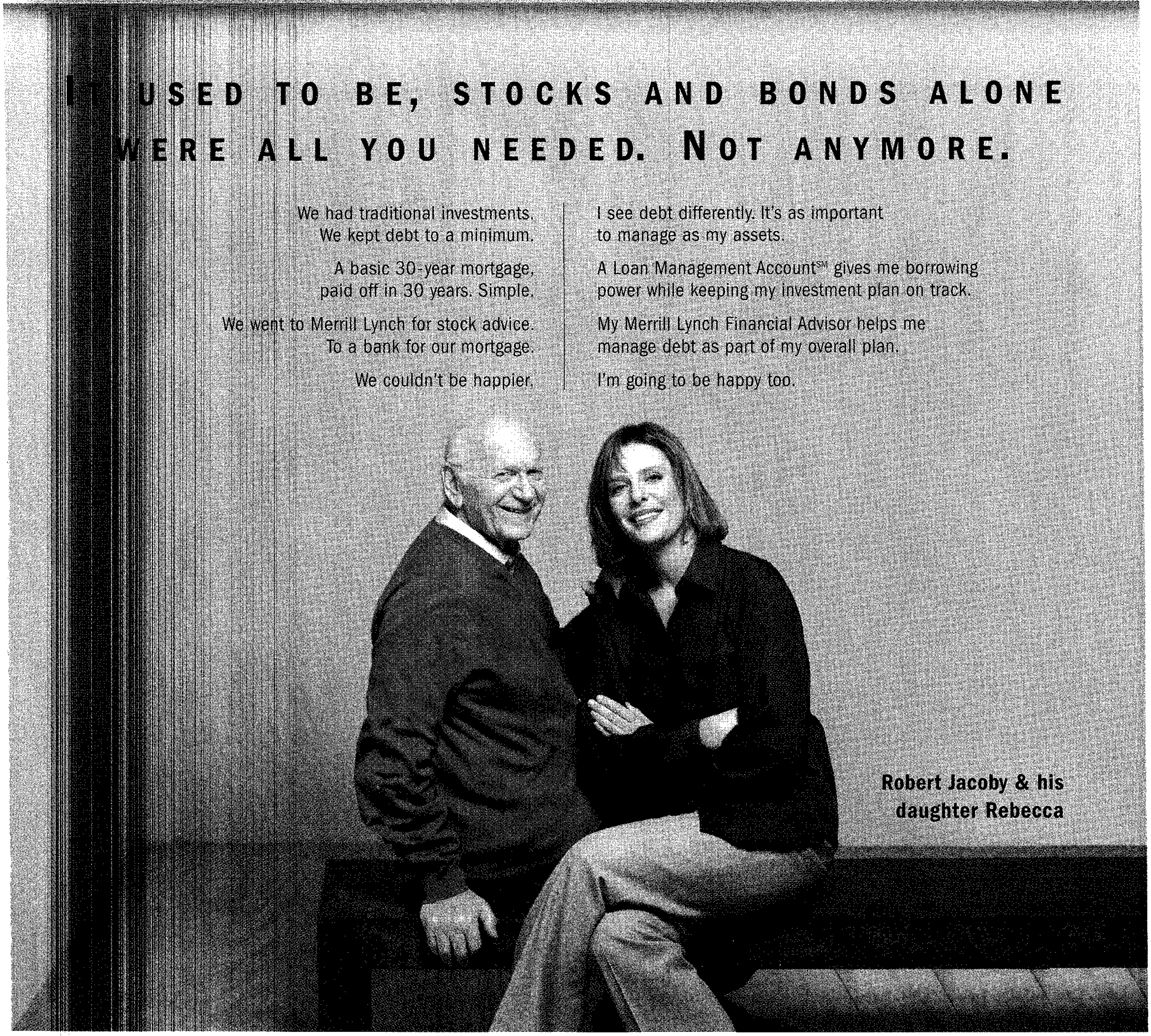

Robert Jacoby & his daughter Rebecca

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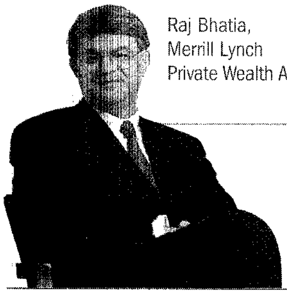

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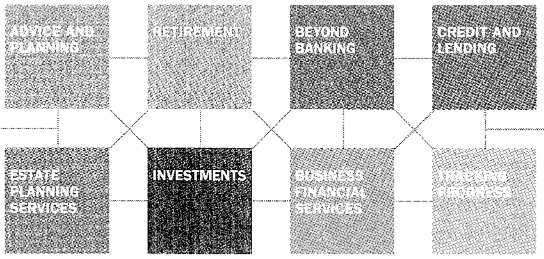
Private Wealth Advisor



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Sol LeWitt's rooftop installation opens April 26 at the Metropolitan Museum. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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24	25	26	20	21	22	23

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
"LAZER VAUDEVILLE"

In May, the Houseman Theatre will be demolished; the building's final production offers a night of solid, old-fashioned spectacle, with the acrobat Nicholas Flair, the hoop roller Carter Brown, and the juggler Cindy Marvell. (See page 13.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE JAMMY AWARDS

Now in their fifth year, the Jammys keep the spirit of jazzlike improvisation alive in rock music. The Grateful Dead's former bassist Phil Lesh hosts the event, which is held at the Theatre at Madison Square Garden; performers include Bruce Hornsby and Burning Spear. (April 26 at 8; see page 16.)

ART
JAPANESE POP

The Japanese word *otaku* refers to the country's obsessive pop-culture consumers and also to the art produced by and about that population. "Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture," now at the Japan Society, includes works by artists such as Yoshitomo Nara, Chinatsu Ban, and Takashi Murakami, who also curated the show. (See page 18.)

MOVIES
"LITTLE FUGITIVE"

In 1953, the married photographers Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin took a handheld movie camera onto the streets of New York to tell the story of a runaway boy. The resulting movie, "Little Fugitive," was nominated for an Oscar for Best Screenplay and inspired a generation of independent filmmakers. In a tribute to Engel, who died on March 5, the Museum of the Moving Image, in Astoria, will show the film April 24-30. (See page 29.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
COLLEGIATE CHORALE

The group, under the direction of Robert Bass, is known for choral excellence; now, in collaboration with the actor Roger Rees, they have put together "A Verdi and Shakespeare Concert," at Carnegie Hall, which combines performances from the composer's Shakespeare operas with readings by Rees, Dana Ivey, and Richard Easton from the original plays. (April 20 at 8; see page 25.)

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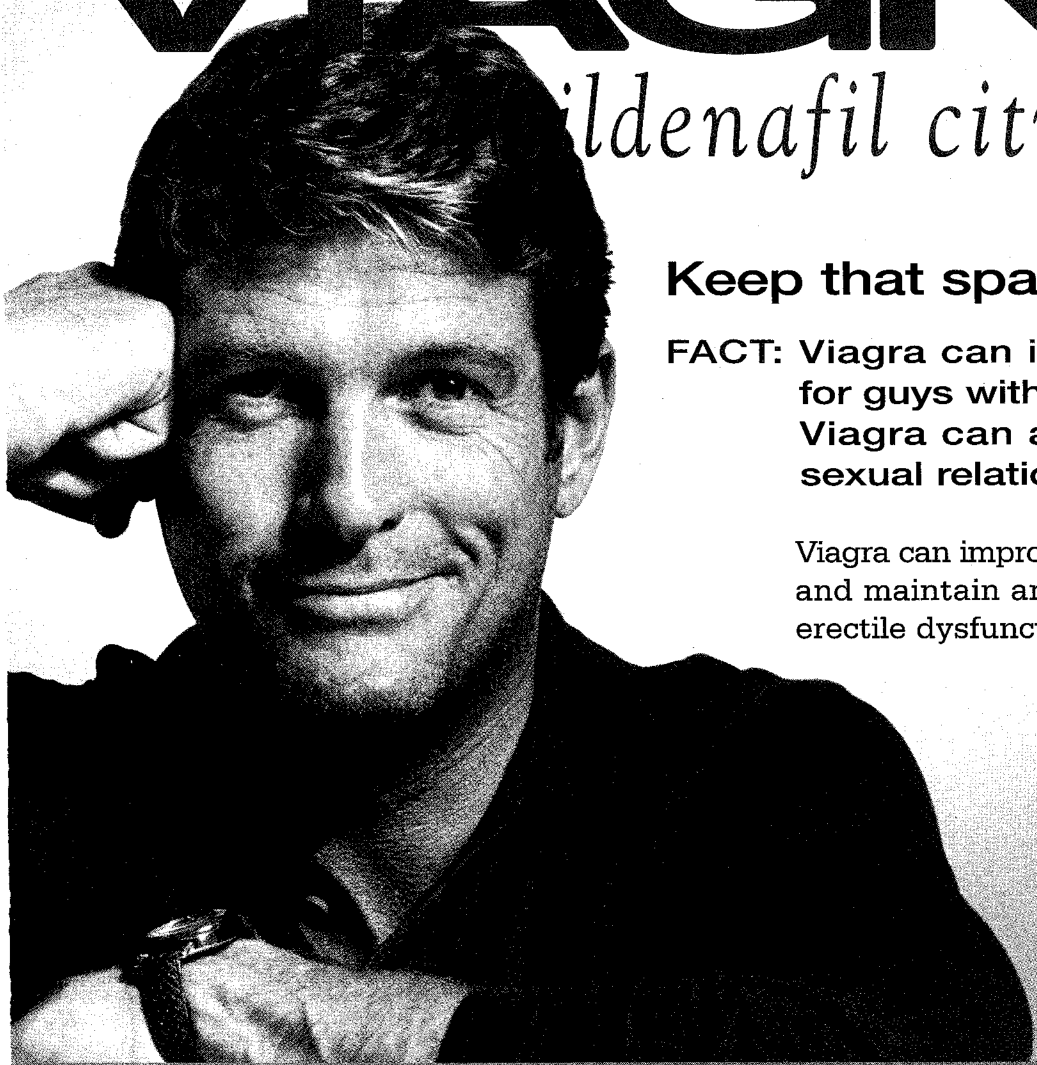

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VIAGRA is prescribed to treat erectile dysfunction. We know that no medicine is for everyone. If you use nitrate drugs, often used for chest pain (known as angina), don't take VIAGRA. Taking these drugs together could cause your blood pressure to drop to an unsafe level.

The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less common are bluish or blurred vision, or being sensitive to light. These may occur for a brief time. Remember to protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted diseases.

Talk with your doctor first. Make sure you are healthy enough to have sex. If you have chest pain, nausea, or other discomforts during sex, seek medical help right away. Although erections lasting for more than four hours may occur rarely with all ED treatments in this drug class, it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Erections lasting longer than six hours can result in long-term loss of potency.

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Please see our patient summary of information for VIAGRA (25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg) tablets on the following page.

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PATIENT SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT **VIAGRA®**

(sildenafil citrate) tablets

This summary contains important information about VIAGRA®. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. Read this information carefully before you start taking VIAGRA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not understand any of this information or if you want to know more about VIAGRA.

This medicine can help many men when it is used as prescribed by their doctors. However, VIAGRA is not for everyone. It is intended for use only by men who have a condition called erectile dysfunction. **VIAGRA must never be used by men who are taking medicines that contain nitrates of any kind, at any time. This includes nitroglycerin. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe or life threatening level.**

• What Is VIAGRA?
VIAGRA is a pill used to treat erectile dysfunction (impotence) in men. It can help many men who have erectile dysfunction get and keep an erection when they become sexually excited (stimulated).

You will not get an erection just by taking this medicine. VIAGRA helps a man with erectile dysfunction get an erection only when he is sexually excited.

• How Sex Affects the Body
When a man is sexually excited, the penis rapidly fills with more blood than usual. The penis then expands and hardens. This is called an erection. After the man is done having sex, this extra blood flows out of the penis back into the body. The erection goes away. If an erection lasts for a long time (more than 6 hours), it can permanently damage your penis. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have a prolonged erection that lasts more than 4 hours.

Some conditions and medicines interfere with this natural erection process. The penis cannot fill with enough blood. The man cannot have an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction if it becomes a frequent problem.

During sex, your heart works harder. Therefore sexual activity may not be advisable for people who have heart problems. Before you start any treatment for erectile dysfunction, ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex. If you have chest pains, dizziness or nausea during sex, stop having sex and immediately tell your doctor you have had this problem.

• How VIAGRA Works
VIAGRA enables many men with erectile dysfunction to respond to sexual stimulation. When a man is sexually excited, VIAGRA helps the penis fill with enough blood to cause an erection. After sex is over, the erection goes away.

• VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone
As noted above (*How Sex Affects the Body*), ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

If you take any medicines that contain nitrates – either regularly or as needed – you should never take VIAGRA. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine or recreational drug containing nitrates, your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe level. You could get dizzy, faint, or even have a heart attack or stroke. Nitrates are found in many prescription medicines that are used to treat angina (chest pain due to heart disease) such as:

- nitroglycerin (sprays, ointments, skin patches or pastes, and tablets that are swallowed or dissolved in the mouth)
- isosorbide mononitrate and isosorbide dinitrate (tablets that are swallowed, chewed, or dissolved in the mouth)

Nitrates are also found in recreational drugs such as amyl nitrate or nitrite ("poppers"). If you are not sure if any of your medicines contain nitrates, or if you do not understand what nitrates are, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

VIAGRA is only for patients with erectile dysfunction. VIAGRA is not for newborns, children, or women. Do not let anyone else take your VIAGRA. VIAGRA must be used only under a doctor's supervision.

• What VIAGRA Does Not Do

- VIAGRA does not cure erectile dysfunction. It is a treatment for erectile dysfunction.
- VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from getting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.
- VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

• What To Tell Your Doctor Before You Begin VIAGRA
Only your doctor can decide if VIAGRA is right for you. VIAGRA can cause mild, temporary lowering of your blood pressure. You will need to have a thorough medical exam to diagnose your erectile dysfunction and to find out if you can safely take VIAGRA alone or with your other medicines. Your doctor should determine if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had any heart problems (e.g., angina, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart beats, heart attack or narrowing of the aortic valve)
- have ever had a stroke
- have low or high blood pressure
- have a rare inherited eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa
- have ever had any kidney problems
- have ever had any liver problems
- have ever had any blood problems, including sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- are allergic to sildenafil or any of the other ingredients of VIAGRA tablets
- have a deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or ever had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- have stomach ulcers or any types of bleeding problems
- are taking any other medicines

• VIAGRA and Other Medicines
Some medicines can change the way VIAGRA works. Tell your doctor about **any medicines** you are taking. Do not start or stop taking any medicines before checking with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription and nonprescription medicines or remedies:

- Remember, VIAGRA should never be used with medicines that contain nitrates (see *VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone*).
- If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy for the treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as you take your dose of alpha-blocker.
- If you are taking a protease inhibitor, your dose may be adjusted (please see *Finding the Right Dose for You*).
- VIAGRA should not be used with any other medical treatments that cause erections. These treatments include pills, medicines that are injected or inserted into the penis, implants or vacuum pumps.

• Finding the Right Dose for You
VIAGRA comes in different doses (25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg). If you do not get the results you expect, talk with your doctor. You and your doctor can determine the dose that works best for you.

- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor prescribes.
- If you think you need a larger dose of VIAGRA, check with your doctor.
- VIAGRA should not be taken more than once a day.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48 hour period. If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as your dose of alpha-blocker.

• How To Take VIAGRA
Take VIAGRA about one hour before you plan to have sex. Beginning in about 30 minutes and for up to 4 hours, VIAGRA can help you get an erection if you are sexually excited. If you take VIAGRA after a high-fat meal (such as a cheeseburger and french fries), the medicine may take a little longer to start working. VIAGRA can help you get an erection when you are sexually excited. You will not get an erection just by taking the pill.

• Possible Side Effects
Like all medicines, VIAGRA can cause some side effects. These effects are usually mild to moderate and usually don't last longer than a few hours. Some of these side effects are more likely to occur with higher doses. The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, flushing of the face, and upset stomach. Less common side effects that may occur are temporary changes in color vision (such as trouble telling the difference between blue and green objects or having a blue color tinge to them), eyes being more sensitive to light, or blurred vision.

In rare instances, men have reported an erection that lasts many hours. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If not treated right away, permanent damage to your penis could occur (see *How Sex Affects the Body*).

Heart attack, stroke, irregular heart beats, and death have been reported rarely in men taking VIAGRA. Most, but not all, of these men had heart problems before taking this medicine. It is not possible to determine whether these events were directly related to VIAGRA.

VIAGRA may cause other side effects besides those listed on this sheet. If you want more information or develop any side effects or symptoms you are concerned about, call your doctor.

• Accidental Overdose
In case of accidental overdose, call your doctor right away.

• Storing VIAGRA
Keep VIAGRA out of the reach of children. Keep VIAGRA in its original container. Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15-30°C (59-86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature].

• For More Information on VIAGRA
VIAGRA is a prescription medicine used to treat erectile dysfunction. Only your doctor can decide if it is right for you. This sheet is only a summary. If you have any questions or want more information about VIAGRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, visit www.viagra.com, or call 1-888-4VIAGRA.

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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The physical comedians Geoff Sobelle and Trey Lyford portray Buster Keaton-style clowns in this tender experiment in anachronism, returning to HERE by popular demand. Opens April 22 at 8:30. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

BEAST ON THE MOON
Omar Metwally stars in the U.S. première of a play by Richard Kalinoski, about a couple who move to America after surviving the Armenian genocide. In previews. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG
A musical based on Roald Dahl's film adaptation of the popular children's book by Ian Fleming. In previews. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
Alan Alda and Liev Schreiber star in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of David Mamet's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Directed by Joe Mantello. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

HURLYBURLY
The New Group's revival of David Rabe's cocaine-fuelled eighties play (with Bobby Cannavale, Josh Hamilton, Ethan Hawke, Catherine Kellner, Parker Posey, Wallace Shawn, and Halley Wegryn Gross) moves to 37 Arts for a twelve-week run. Opens April 20 at 7. (450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

PRIVILEGE
A new dark comedy by Paul Weitz, about the social fallout two teen-agers suffer when their father is convicted of insider trading. In previews. Opens April 25 at 6:45. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
Natasha Richardson stars in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of the Tennessee Williams play. Edward Hall directs. In previews. Opens April 26 at 7. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

SWEET CHARITY
A revival of the musical from 1966 about a good-natured prostitute (modelled on the heroine of Fellini's "Nights of Cabiria") stars Christina Applegate. Directed by Walter Bobbie. In previews. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin's satisfying musical comedy has moved to Broadway. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

ABANDONMENT
In a play by the British mystery writer Kate Atkinson ("Case Histories"), even the handyman waxes philosophical. The plot—the nineteenth-century inhabitants of a creaky old apartment haunt its modern-day occupants—borrows heavily from Stoppard's "Arcadia," but this is Stoppard lite, at best. Still, the cast is good, and the play makes for a diverting soap opera when it isn't affecting interest in chaos theory and other erudite matters. (Sanford Meisner Theatre, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 212-868-4444.)

ALL SHOOK UP
From his pompadoured locks to his blue suède shoes, Cheyenne Jackson is a hunk, a hunk of burnin' love, with bulging cartoon biceps and mighty lungs. Sharon Wilkins, as a love-struck barkeep, offers gospel-tinged rock balladeering. But this soulless new show, whose factitious plot is built on the King's songbook, constitutes final proof that Elvis is dead. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE AUDIENCE
Essentially a novelty idea—it's a show about theatregoers who gather to watch a new Broadway

play—this meta-musical is like "A Chorus Line" without a single high kick. Created by the Transport Group, with forty-six actors and twenty-eight playwrights, lyricists, and composers, the show is sometimes amusing, sometimes acerbic, and often original, but it wears a little thin in the second hour. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101. Closes April 23.)

CHINA DOLL
Elizabeth Wong's new play for the Pan Asian Repertory presents the fascinating life of the Asian-American screen siren Anna May Wong, on the centenary of her birth. With her sultry looks, Wong (played by the alluring Roseanne Ma) was the incarnation of Old Hollywood's idea of the exotic—a femme fatale redolent of sandalwood and jasmine. In the twenties and thirties, she made dozens of films, typically cast as a dragon lady or a swooning slave, and co-starred with Marlene Dietrich in "Shanghai Express." Yet A-list parts eluded her, and the racism of the entertainment industry left bruises. The material offers genuine interest, but the production, directed by Tisa Chang, is histrionic, and never shows the woman behind the mask. (West End Theatre, 263 W. 86th St. 212-279-4200. Through April 24.)

DOUBT
Cherry Jones stars in John Patrick Shanley's well-told tale about possible sexual abuse in a Catholic school. Doug Hughes directs. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/04.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FALSE SERVANT
In Marivaux's eighteenth-century comedy, a noblewoman dons breeches to set a trap for the scoundrel she's supposed to marry. In the Classic Stage Company's blithe revival, with a sparkling new translation by Kathleen Tolan, Martha Plimpton gives a bravura performance as the cross-dressing noblewoman, handling her masculine alter ego (Chevalier) with such skill that she not only befriends her dissolute intended, Lelio (Jesse Pennington), and foils his amorous schemes but also wins the heart of a countess (Tina Benko) along the way. Three centuries on, Marivaux's comic and romantic intuitions are as crystalline as ever. (136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

GOING TO ST. IVES
In a quiet English cottage, a prim and proper eye surgeon (Vivienne Benesch) pours tea for a guest, May N'Kame (L. Scott Caldwell), the mother of an Idi Amin-like African dictator. The two women hatch a plan to end the dictator's reign of terror and free political hostages. Lee Blessing's plot is tortuous but has moments of lucid power. Caldwell gives a remarkable performance as a woman whose maternal feeling has turned icy with time but whose heart remains anguished by the choice she must make. Directed by Maria Mileaf, for Primary Stages. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Closes April 24.)

INDEX TO IDIOMS
The Obie-winning monologuist Deb Margolin recounts her life through the prism of English expressions, from "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" to "face the music." Each cliché serves as the headline for a different vignette, told with the lyrical imagery of everyday suburban life. The subjects of Margolin's knowing and often funny tales range from her first date (with an eager refrigerator thief) to her precocious daughter (who, at three years old, threatened to "defenestrate" her doll). Directed by Merri Milwe. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

LAZER VAUDEVILLE
The Houseman Theatre's farewell production—the building will be demolished in May—is an evening of glow-in-the-dark juggling acts and rope tricks performed by three aces. The acrobat Nicholas Flair, the hoop roller Carter Brown, and the juggler Cindy Marvell attempt stunts that leave zero margin for error (e.g., juggling a chain saw). Sight gags and a catchy soundtrack move things along, but it's the performers' obvious enjoyment of their craft that lends the show its distinctive, old-fashioned charm. (450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA
A musical based on Elizabeth Spencer's novella about a mother and daughter who travel through Italy in 1953. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS
Ron Hutchinson's screwball comedy turns writer's block into slapstick. The play is spun around an actual historical moment—five days in February, 1939, when the massively over-budget production of "Gone with the Wind" went on hiatus, as the producer David O. Selznick (Douglas Sills) locked the screenwriter Ben Hecht (Matthew Arkin) and the director Victor Fleming (David Rasche) in his office and made them create a new script. In Hutchinson's depiction, this scenario resembles famous Preston

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TABLES FOR TWO

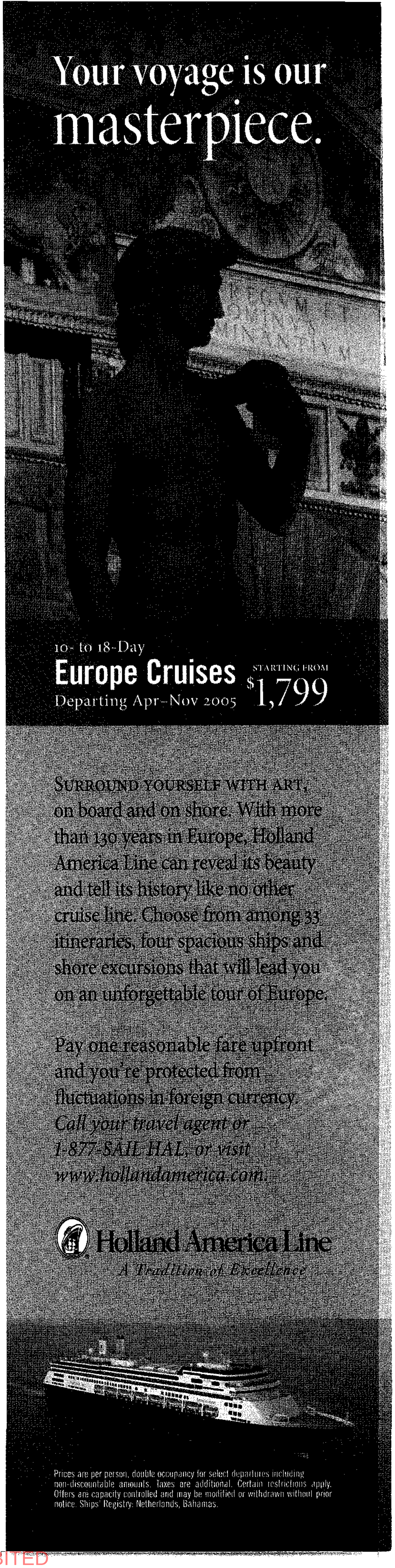
ONERA

222 W. 79th St. (212-873-0200)—"Onera" is Greek for "dreams," and the chef Michael Psilakis, a first-generation Greek-American who until last year ran an Italian restaurant on Long Island, has created a suitably imaginative compromise between his cultural and culinary heritages. Gone are such familiar standbys as dolmades, hummus, and charcoal-grilled fish. In their place there is a moussaka drizzled with truffle oil and a grilled loin of lamb whose sun-dried-tomato crust momentarily evokes veal pomodoro. Purists may balk at a dish like Manti "Reinvented"—which recasts the dumplings of Central Asia as, basically, chestnut ravioli—but Psilakis's execution is uniformly impressive.

The restaurant, which seats about fifty, is long, narrow, and just below street level; its décor (dark-blue walls, with white panelling and pilasters) has an understated elegance. The menu is large and complex, with, in addition to appetizers and entrées, a selection of raw meze. Scallops with yogurt, cucumber, and pickled fennel and lamb with Kalamata olives, arugula, and fried shallots are particularly good. And there are various tasting menus, including, infamously, one composed entirely of offal, which must be requested two days in advance. The calves' brains, pan-seared, airy, and golden, are the highlight.

Greece has some three hundred indigenous varieties of grape, and among more than a hundred bottles on offer here are bold Agiorghitiko reds from Nemea, dry Assyrtiko whites from the volcanic island of Santorini, and a dessert wine that sounds like a goddess, Mavrodaphne of Patras. That old taverna favorite retsina has been banished to the by-the-glass list. On the dessert menu, an inventive series of rose-flavored dishes, including the inevitable Turkish delight and a surprisingly sophisticated miniature milkshake, is a winning creation. But although the tower of puff pastry and Marsala cream described as Baklava "Reinterpreted" is an impressive feat of engineering it's unlikely to replace classic baklava anytime soon. (Open daily for dinner until May 1; thereafter, Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $14-$26.)

—*Leo Carey*



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HAVING A BALL

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

The Great African Ball, coming to the Roseland Ballroom on April 29, is to other parties what the Tour de France is to other bicycling competitions: longer, bigger, and more entertaining. The Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour started the ball in 1999 to give African nationals a chance to go home, at least for one night, while letting curious Americans experience an African party. This year's ball will star King Sunny Ade, a legend of Nigerian juju music. Ade is appearing for the first time ever with Prince Obi Osadebe, a master of the slightly more upscale highlife style. In Ade's music, talking drums create a bubbling river that the multiple guitar players navigate with clean, clipped phrases. The entertainment also relies on audience "spraying," a tradition that involves sticking money to the performer's body, usually the forehead. The ball isn't one of those grim club events where the dancers hang on until the drugs wear off; by 4 A.M., when the show is scheduled to end, everyone may just be getting a second wind.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

Sturges meltdown scenes. Don't miss the pre-curtain montage of vintage screen-test footage of Scarletts who didn't make the final cut—including Lana Turner and Paulette Goddard. Directed by Lynne Meadow, whose sole instruction seems to have been: "Let 'er rip!" (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ORANGE FLOWER WATER
The writer Craig Wright, from the HBO drama "Six Feet Under," brings that program's blend of soulfulness and self-knowledge to his play about two crumbling marriages and a shaky love affair. Performed by an outstanding cast, the drama focusses on love, both real and mistaken, and its consequences. Carolyn Cantor's production is truly intimate, and not just because of its frank sex scene. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 212-868-4444.)

A PICASSO
John Tillinger directs a new play by Jeffrey Hatcher, set during the German occupation of Paris, about an imagined confrontation between Picasso and an interrogator over confiscated art works. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE PILLOWMAN
A drama by the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh stars Jeff Goldblum and Billy Crudup. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SIDES: THE FEAR IS REAL
The handful of Asian-American actors who make up Mr. Miyagi's Theatre Company—Sekiya Billman, Cindy Cheung, Paul H. Juhn, Peter Kim, Hoon Lee, and Rodney To—perform acutely observed self-caricatures in a series of interwoven skits that send up the despair, posturing, backstabbing, and over-all insanity of actors during the audition process. Seamlessly and briskly directed by Anne Kauffman. Presented by the Obie-winning Ma-Yi Theatre Company. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through May 1.)

SLAG HEAP
Fine performances by the lead actors can't keep Anton Dudley's play about three prostitutes in post-Thatcher England from sinking into melodrama. Familiar types (the hooker with a heart of gold, the woman scorned) jolt the audience with occasional acts of sadism, mutilation, or sex with a minor. The play sheds a tear at life's cruelty, while hiding a snigger. Directed by Michael Morris. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., west of Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200. Through May 7.)

SOULS OF NAPLES
The New York première of a comedy by Eduardo De Filippo (translated by Michael Feingold), set in crumbling post-war Italy, stars John Turturro. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ALTAR BOYZ: Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DEMOCRACY:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **DESSA ROSE:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **GOOD VIBRATIONS:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **JULIUS CAESAR:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NINE PARTS OF DESIRE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **ON GOLDEN POND:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PRODUCERS:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ROMANCE:** Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes May 1.) **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THIS IS HOW IT GOES:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. (Through April 24.) **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **TWELVE ANGRY MEN:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **WHAT OF THE NIGHT:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. (Through April 23.) **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—April 21: Despite changing his hair style a number of times in the past few years, **Lenny Kravitz** still isn't known for innovation; instead, he mines the classic rock and soul sounds of the sixties and seventies, often to the point of self-parody. April 22: The British rock icon **Elvis Costello** is on tour behind "The Delivery Man," a bluesy, old-timey exploration of American roots music that includes duets with Emmylou Harris and Lucinda Williams. April 25-26 and April 28-30: **Bob Dylan.** The voice has grown more cracked over the years, and the personality more mysterious. These days he's near the top of his game, although he now plays keyboards rather than the guitar. He's travelling with the country-music iconoclast **Merle Haggard** and the up-and-coming soul-folk singer **Amos Lee.**

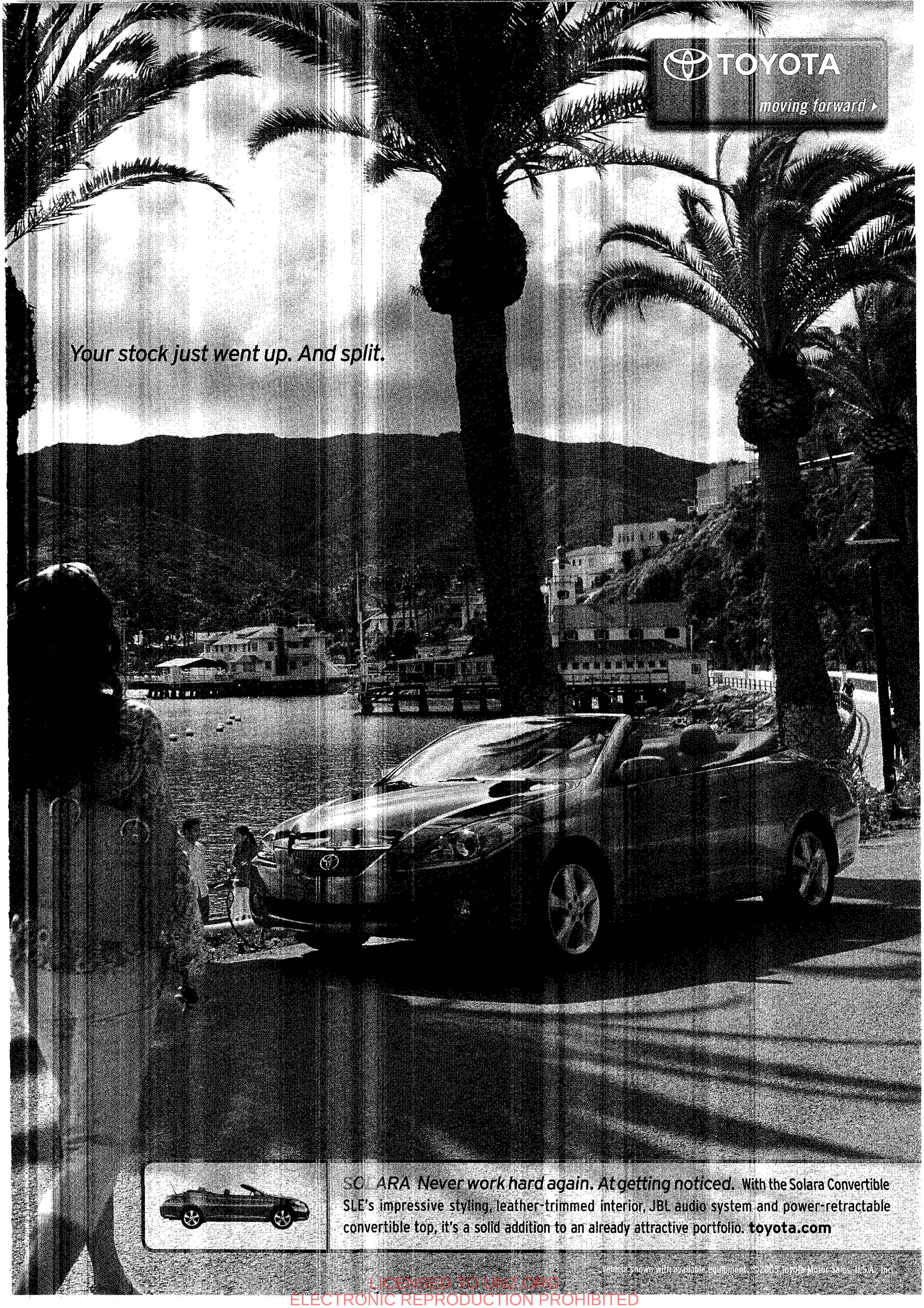
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 26: The unrepentant good ol' boy **Travis Tritt.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 22: **Ivy,** a European-inflected pop trio featuring the French singer Dominique Durand and Adam Schlesinger (who's half of the Fountains of Wayne), stops by with gems from its new album, "In the Clear." April 23: The Bay Area transplant **Out Hud** began its life as an instrumental band whose layered, distortion-heavy songs had a single coefficient: they always had a dance beat. They've added a vocalist, which makes their music all the more enticing.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—April 20: **Handsome Boy Modeling School.** To list the contributors to the latest album from the producers Prince Paul and Dan (the Automator) Nakamura is to stroll through the Rolodex of two of the most progressive hip-hop producers in the business. Their second record, "White People," combines classic hip-hop rhythms with rock, roots, and jazz and features a diverse group of vocalists, from the throaty Cat Power to the veteran m.c. Del tha Funky Homosapien and the Jamaican dancehall singer Barrington Levy. The duo appears with the Canadian m.c. **K-Os** and the Hawaiian hip-hop duo the **Rondo Brothers.** April 23: The young English rapper **Dizzee Rascal.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—April 22: **Howard Fishman,** a gravel-voiced singer and guitarist whose interests range from small-group jazz to indie rock, celebrates the release of his fourth studio album, "Look at All This!" The **Mingus Orchestra** is here Thursdays, with sets at 11:30 and 1:30 A.M.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—April 20: The Japanese noise-rock band **Melt Banana** pairs a blistering din with an odd lyrical sensibility that is as poetic as it is surreal—song titles include "Like a White Bat in a Box, Dead Matters Go On" and "Pigeons on My Eyes (Go to Bed)." While clearly not for everyone, Melt Banana certainly can't be called bland. April 21: The feisty Brooklyn-based **Hungry March Band,** once dubbed the "Best Anarchist Parade Band" by a downtown weekly, lights into songs from its new CD, "Critical Brass." April 23: **Desmond Dekker.** In 1969, with his hit "The Israelites," the Jamaica-born singer became the first reggae artist to top the U.K. charts. Known as the King of Ska, Dekker laid down twenty No. 1 Jamaican hits in the sixties, and he continued to chart into the seventies.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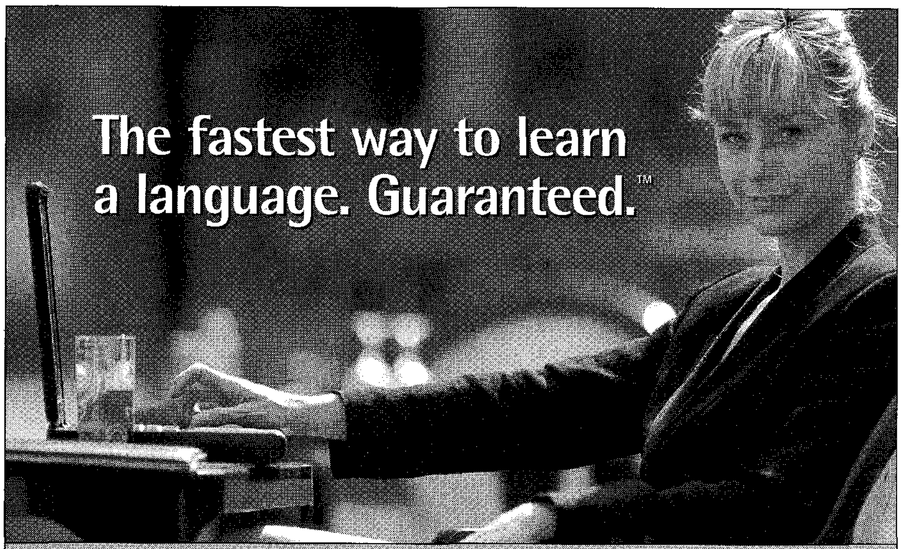

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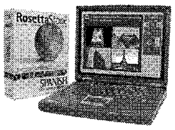

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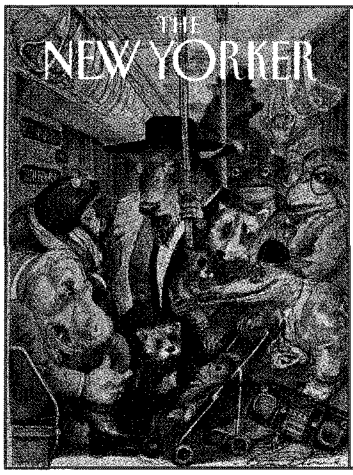

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MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—April 22: The **Woggles** give garage rock a jolt of adrenaline. April 24: Scotland's **Trashcan Sinatras** specialize in jangly indie pop.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—April 22: **Faun Fables** (a.k.a. Dawn McCarthy) is a wandering minstrel from Oakland, California, with a goosebump-inducing voice. Last year, she released an autobiographical record called "Family Album" that revolves, loosely, around her family and the family of Nils Frykdahl, her longtime collaborator. Frykdahl, the front man for the avant-rock heroes Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, joins her here, playing flute, autoharp, guitar, bass, and whatever else he fancies. April 23: **Trashcan Sinatras** (see Maxwell's).

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—The expat Brazilian d.j. **Amon Tobin** has been somewhat of a cult favorite since his début album, "Bricolage," hit the international electronica scene a decade ago. His free-form compositions of jazzy drum and bass appeared most recently on the third installment of the Tom Clancy Splinter Cell video game, released last month. On April 22, Tobin presents a signature multidimensional soundscape, enhanced by surround-sound audio technology.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—April 22: **Hydra.** The versatile drummer Mickey Hart, of Grateful Dead fame, teams up with the experimental jam band Particle to create the new-millennium hippie's dream act. April 29: The **Great African Ball,** featuring King Sunny Ade and Prince Obi Osadebe.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—April 21: The Empire State reggae band **John Brown's Body** celebrates the release of its new album, "Pressure Points." They are joined by another upbeat brassy music collective, **Dub Is a Weapon.**

THEATRE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—April 26: The Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh hosts the fifth annual **Jammy Awards,** in which members of the jam-band nation celebrate the improvisational spirit. Performers include the singer-songwriter Ryan Adams, the piano man Bruce Hornsby, the roots-reggae master Burning Spear, and Les Claypool, of Primus.

ZANKEL HALL
At Carnegie Hall (212-247-7800)—April 22: The World Music Institute presents a rare appearance by **Simon Diaz.** The seventy-six-year-old Venezuelan singer and composer is adored at home for upholding the *campesina* traditions of the countryside. Here he's less well known, but that doesn't mean his music hasn't been heard: The Gipsy Kings' hit "Bamboleo" is based on his composition "Caballo Viejo." (For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—April 20-22: The **Joe Maneri Quartet** plays its final shows. Microtonal improvisation never did become the big new thing in jazz, but it wasn't for lack of trying on Maneri's part. The septuagenarian saxophonist is dissolving his quartet (which includes his son Matt on violin) in style: the featured guests include the trumpeter **Herb Robertson,** the pianist **Dave Burrell,** and the vibraphonist **Matt Moran.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—April 19-24: The saxophonists **Arthur Blythe** and **Dewey Redman,** the guitarist **James (Blood) Ulmer,** and the organist **Lonnie Smith** gather for a week of stomping and soulful blues. The volcanic drummer **Jeff (Tain) Watts** lends support.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through May 27, the vocalist **Barbara Cook.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—April 19-24: A trio of the pianist **Kenny Barron,** the bassist **Ray Drummond,** and the drummer **Grady Tate** provides one of the smoothest rides on the road. Barron, although accustomed to working with paramount rhythm teams, might find himself spoiled after this engagement.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—**Keely Smith.** Playing the straight woman to her then-husband Louis Prima during that wild man's fifties heyday gave Smith (here April 19-May 7) permanent neo-hipster status, but her talents as a mainstream vocalist—as evidenced on the recently released album "Las Vegas '58: Today"—are still under-recognized.

The hip-hop act Handsome Boy Modeling School rolls into Irving Plaza.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—April 22-23: The current installation of the "As of Now" series finds **Jason Moran** and **Marcus Roberts** sharing time at the Rose Theatre. Moran is the hottest jazz pianist on the scene today; Roberts was the golden keyboardist of the nineties. Both men are historically minded stylists who shake up conventions from wholly different angles.

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—April 19-May 1: **Donna McKechnie,** still one singular sensation thirty years after knocking them dead in "A Chorus Line," brings the same charisma and focus to her small-stage vocal interpretations that she did to her work on the Great White Way.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 21-24: The onetime pop singer **Curtis Stigers** turned to standards even before Rod Stewart did; Stigers now combines the two worlds on his new album, "I Think It's Going to Rain Today," which unites the work of Randy Newman, Stephen Sondheim, Sting, and others.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—April 21: The saxophonist and composer **Rudresh Mahanthappa.** April 22-23: The Brazilian percussionist **Duduka Da Fonseca,** a key member of Trio da Paz, may be the most impressive jazz-besotted Brazilian percussionist since Airto Moreira. He balances tropical rhythms and swing with uncommon ease.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 19-24: Through sheer tenacity and the application of a vocal talent that has steadily ripened with the

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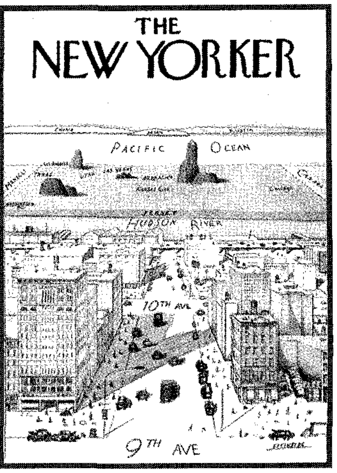

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WEB EXCLUSIVE:

Elizabeth Kolbert talks about how global warming is changing the world.

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passing years, **Carol Sloane** has become one of the grandes dames of jazz singing. Her knowing interpretations of lyrics and sly phrasing should be closely studied by the new generation of chanteuses. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. ♦ **"Diane Arbus: Revelations,"** an indeed revealing (though gratingly worshipful) retrospective, confirms Arbus's achievement as a revolutionary photographer. Through May 30. ♦ Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. Through May 15. ♦ **"From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master."** Through May 1. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm"** centers on a pair of exquisite four-panel screens depicting the eight Taoist Immortals, made for the Tensho-in temple in Kyoto by the master Sansetsu circa 1647. Split apart some forty years ago and sold to the Met and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the pair are reunited here and shown with related works from the Met's collection. Through June 5. ♦ **"The Armored Horse in Europe, 1480-1620"** is a one-room show of leather and metal examples from the golden age of the obsolete craft of horse armor. Items range from brutally practical sets made for low-ranking soldiers to more fanciful designs displayed by kings in military parades. Through Jan. 15, 2006. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro's winning redesign for the abandoned elevated train tracks that run through Chelsea will be on display in **"The High Line."** Opens April 19. ♦ **"Thomas Demand."** The German artist's crisp photographs of cut-and-glued, life-size mockups of unpeopled environments suggest that, like photographs, our assumptions about reality are paper thin. Through May 30. ♦ In **"Contemporary Voices: Works from the UBS Art Collection,"** some forty works promised to MOMA as a corporate gift are accompanied by thirty more from the firm's collection. Selections from the sixties, seventies, and eighties include an excellent Guston, two good Richters, a nice Artschwager, and a wonderful room of Susan Rothenbergs. Younger artists, not surprisingly, are less well served; in the last room, only Andreas Gursky is represented by a really first-class piece. Through April 25. ♦ **"Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape"** surveys the newest waves in landscape design with elaborate architectural models, virtual tours, video, and photographs. Through May 16. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Eye of the Storm: Works in Situ by Daniel Buren."** Through June 8. ♦ **"The Hugo Boss Prize 2004: Rirkrit Tiravanija."** Tiravanija's "Untitled 2005 (The Air Between the Chain-Link Fence and the Broken Bicycle Wheel)" takes viewers' experience of television from passive to active with an engaging demonstration of how to build a low-power TV station. Through May 11. ♦ Slater Bradley's **"Doppelganger Trilogy."** Through May 22. ♦ The museum surveys twentieth-century innovation in painting with three exhibitions of work drawn from the permanent collection: **"School of Paris,"** through May 3, and **"Expressionism"** and **"Paul Klee,"** both through May 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper."** Through May 8. ♦ **"Tim Hawkinson,"** a mid-career retrospective of the California artist's diverse inventions, including the football-field-size "Überorgan," an automated bagpipe housed in the sculpture garden at 590 Madison Avenue, at Fifty-seventh Street. Through May 29. ♦ **"Ellen Gallagher: DeLuxe,"** a series of embellished images based on advertisements from mid-century African-American magazines. Through May 15. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a selection of work by artists who bring the techniques of drawing to their printmaking efforts. Opens April 14. ♦ **"Set Up: Recent Acquisitions in Photography."** Through June 26. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Basquiat"** is an important, intensely enjoyable retrospective of the neo-expressionist, who died in 1988, at the age of twenty-seven. Through June 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—It doesn't sound thrilling at first—you can almost hear the cocktail-party bore declaiming "Just one word: textiles." But **"Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance"** is actually a seriously sexy show, quick to stoke imagination and amazement. The wing suits for skydivers are less stylish versions of something Lara Croft might wear, and the fast-deploying webs for riot control are clearly inspired by Spider-Man. The Tumbleweed, a giant computerized beach ball that follows the wind on Mars, periodically deflates to collect data, then reinflates and rolls on. The parade of ingenuity continues with woven structural supports for skyscrapers, "intelligent" ropes that can signal when they're overburdened, racing cars and sailboats with ultralight chassis, and much more. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—The British collection **"Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge"** arrives for its first American tour with thirty-six small statues, by mostly little-known French, Dutch, German, and Italian artists, dating from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century. Through April 24. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—Curated by Takashi Murakami, **"Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture"** is a survey of *otaku*-influenced artists, including Yoshitomo Nara, whose saucer-eyed children are like hipper, more knowing versions of the Keane illustrations from the nineteen-sixties; Chinatsu Ban, whose supercute elephant sculpture stands at the southeast corner of Central Park; and Murakami himself, who has wrapped the Society's home in a graphic banner. Through July 24. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Mexico: The Revolution and Beyond, Photographs by Casasola 1900-1940."** Through July 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Greater New York 2005,"** a co-production with the Museum of Modern Art, collects work by more than a hundred and sixty artists from around the city who have emerged in the past five years. Through Sept. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

NORMAN BLUHM
The buoyant gestures and pervasive drips tie these works on paper to Abstract Expressionism, but the

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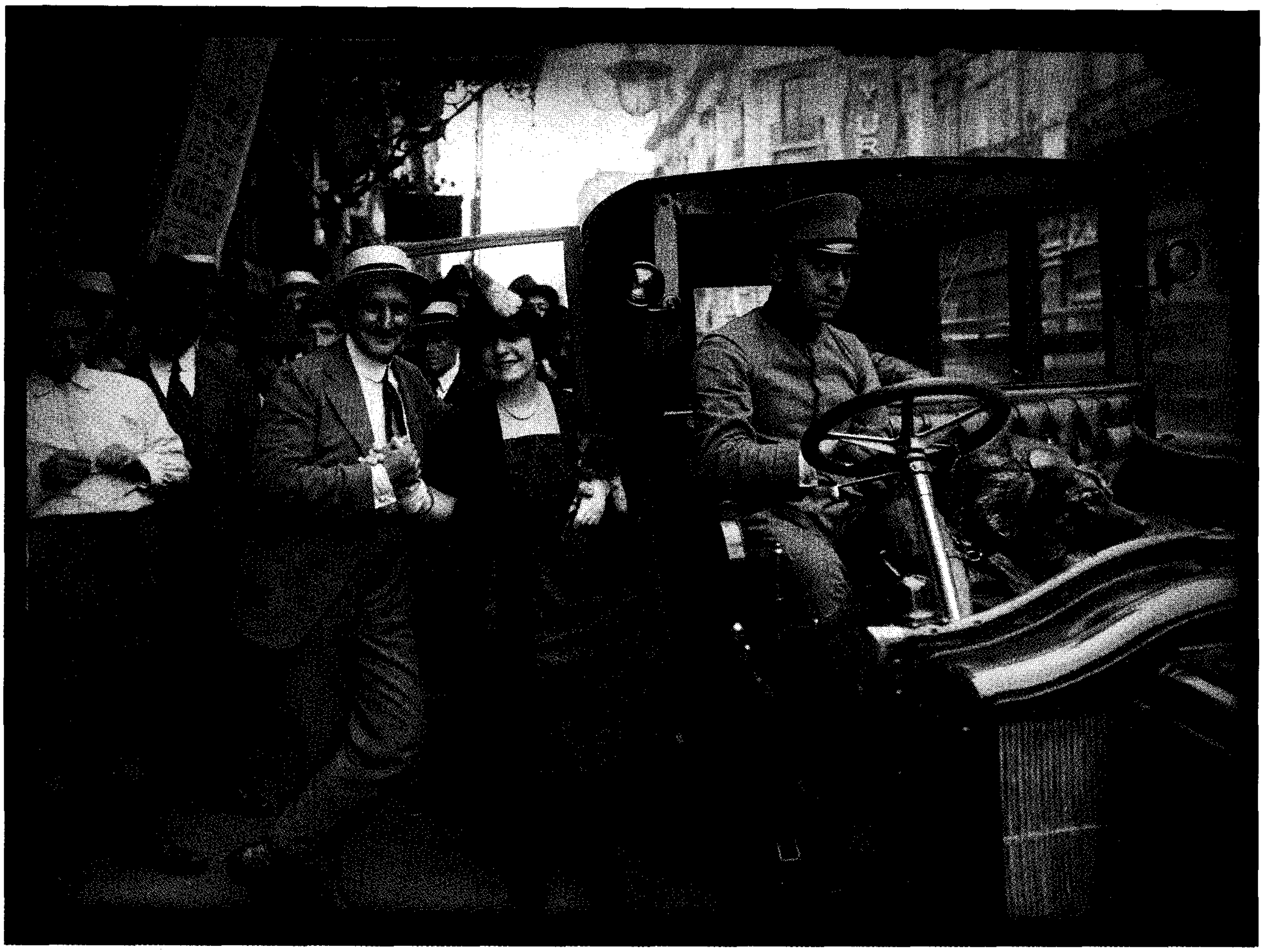


Agustín Victor Casasola's photograph of María Conesa, a zarzuela singer and actress in Mexico City, at El Museo del Barrio.

carefully traced patterns and mirrored compositions suggest other influences: Japanese prints, animation, elaborately flocked wallpaper. Bluhm (1921-99) has been linked artistically with everyone from his Cedar Tavern drinking buddies de Kooning and Franz Kline to the poet Frank O'Hara, with whom he made "poem paintings." He later withdrew from New York to a corner of rural Vermont, where he continued making work that still blooms fresh on the paper, and in three canvases at Graham's Chelsea space. Through April 23. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave. 212-535-5767.)

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Small illustrations of airplanes, movie stars, explorers, French maids, and other romantic icons of the early twentieth century by an occasional contributor to this magazine. Executed in watercolor, gouache, and ink, and often stitched together to make books, they have a scratchy, offhand charm. Through April 30. (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 212-838-0333.)

PAT STEIR

Fifteen works on paper in pencil and spattered ink, smaller, more energetic counterparts to the paintings on view at Cheim & Read, in Chelsea. Through May 11. (Cook, 1063 Madison Ave., at 81st St. 212-737-3550.)

THOMAS STRUTH

No matter how spectacular and engrossing, Struth's enormous color photos can be forbiddingly chilly; even portraits of friends have a formal standoffishness. But "Audience," a new series made at Florence's Galleria dell'Accademia, is full of unexpected warmth. Struth's subject is the milling crowd itself—a throng of tourists in summer clothes, nearly all of them gazing up at something we can't see (Michelangelo's "David," as it turns out). Like Philip-Lorca diCorcia's equally serendipitous street scenes, Struth's pictures draw viewers into the jumble of humanity and invite us to mingle, stare, and stay awhile. Through May 7. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

"CELEBRATE: 22 YEARS & A NEW HOME"

Art-market feng shui usually dictates that successful younger artists are shown in echoing white Chelsea garages, not swank town houses on the Upper East Side. So it's a pleasant surprise that the wedding-cake plaster moldings, parquetry floors, and marble fireplaces at the new Jack Tilton gallery frame an energizing selection of mostly small-scale work by artists like Danica Phelps, Douglas Gordon, Glenn Ligon, Nicole Eisenman, Patty Chang, and Francis Alÿs. Gravitas is provided by the elders Nancy Spero, David Hammons, and Marlene Dumas. Through May 12. (Tilton, 8 E. 76th St. 212-977-7160.)

Short List

LARRY BURROWS: Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930. Through April 30. **MARTIN KIPPENBERGER:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313. Through April 23. **BRUCE MCCALL:** James Goodman, 41 E. 57th St. 212-593-3737. Through April 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ADAM ADACH

More evidence that the half-life of failed ideologies is longer and more potent than we might wish, Adach's paintings read like an archive of Iron Curtain-era photo albums and magazines. His gray-and-dirty-pink palette imparts a faintly nauseous nostalgia to scenes of laborers in factories, tankers and rowboats negotiating bleak harbors, and babushka'd women menaced—or perhaps guarded?—by a soldier in a snowy forest. This is the New York début for the Polish-born Adach, who now lives in Paris. Through April 30. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460.)

ELMGREEN & DRAGSET

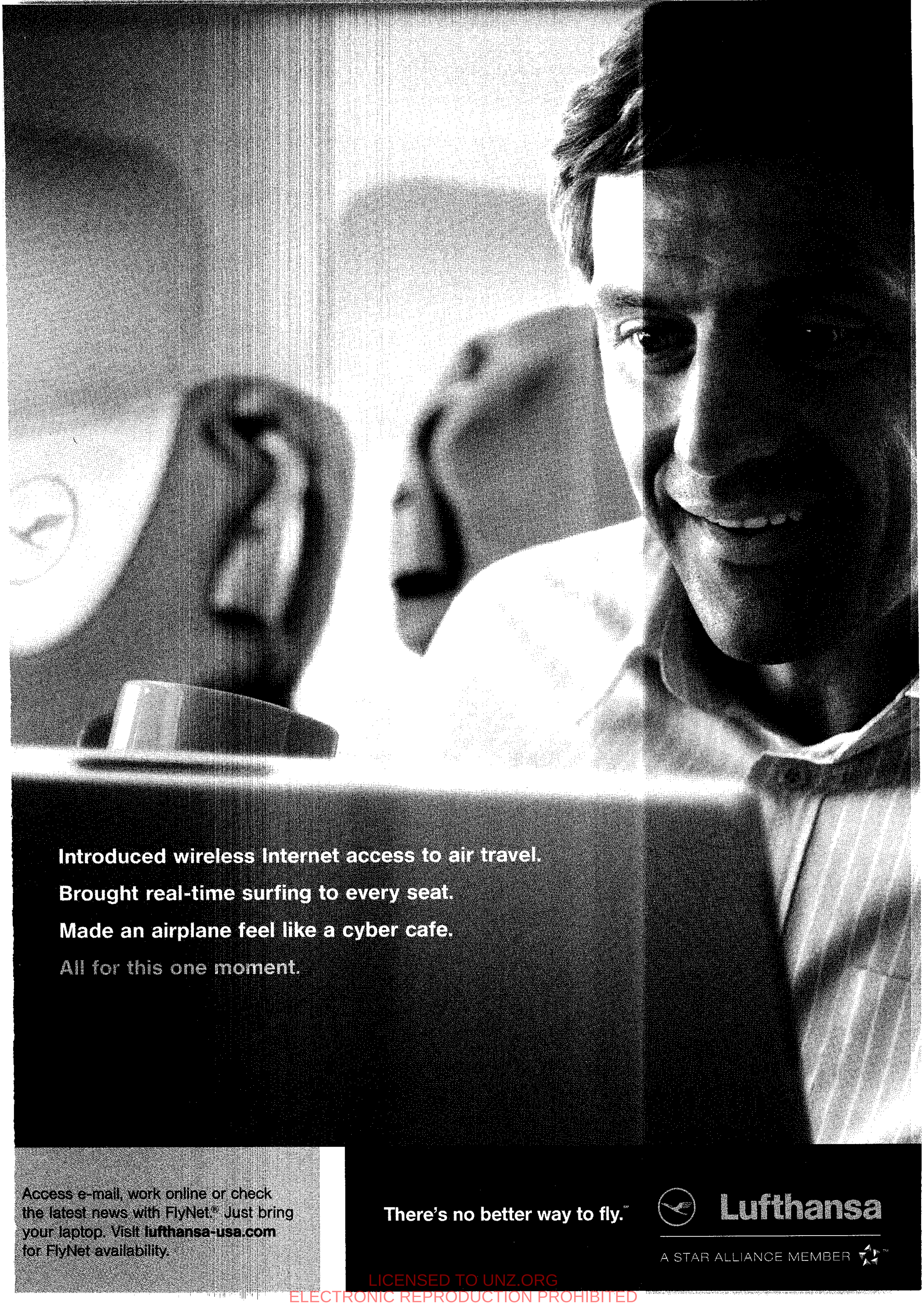
On arriving at Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset's "End Station," all one finds in the cavernous gallery is a sign in an M.T.A.-style font indicating an exit down the stairs. Descend to the basement, though, and there's a full-scale stage set for the "13 Street" subway stop, complete with tattered posters, graffiti, and trash on tracks that lead to a trompe-l'oeil tunnel. It's like a Manhattanland at Disney World: too bright, a little cutesy. Where are the rats? The buskers? The century of grime? Through July 1. (Bohen Foundation, 415 W. 13th St. 212-414-4575.)

ELGER ESSER

Scrubbed of extraneous detail, reduced to a bleached monochrome, and blown up to resemble the view through a picture window, this German photographer's previous landscapes have been minimal but sensuous. For this new series, he's appropriated vintage postcards of seascapes and beach scenes featuring piers, boats, bathers, and several dramatic crashing waves. Esser has supersized details of the originals and emphasized their primitive, garish coloring; the results recall Lichtenstein's pop pointillism and Vik Muniz's newsprint-based "Pictures of Ink." But the mood, summed up by a picture of sunlight streaming through storm clouds, is unabashedly romantic and irresistibly uncool. Through April 23. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

KEVIN LANDERS

The latest generation of Pop-inflected art is a far cry from Warhol's "Brillo Boxes" and, at the same time, not so different at all. Using specific brands no longer shocks, so Landers goes for Platonic an-



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onymity. "Thrift Shop Appliance Shelf" holds a generic radio, calculator, and coffeemaker, carefully crafted from Plexiglas and Mylar; "Lottery Shelf" displays hand-drawn lottery cards. Like Thomas Demand's photographs, which rely on the frisson between visual truth and fabricated fiction, Landers's sculptures are rough hewn, but savvy enough to initially fool the eye. Through April 23. (Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545.)

JEAN PAUL RIOPELLE
The underrated French-Canadian abstract painter Riopelle (1923-2002) belonged to a mid-century movement, centered in France, that contested the ascendancy of American Abstract Expressionism with carefully rumpled updates of standard Parisian tastes: rectified composition, painterly cuisine, raffish aplomb. His dense welters of palette-knifed strokes, jewel-like in color, made him the best member of a cohort that included Pierre Soulages and Hans Hartung, but Riopelle was not in a class with his companion of twenty-four years, Joan Mitchell. Surprising in this show are some exciting works, circa 1959, painted in a freed-up, Mitchellesque manner that he soon let drop. Through April 30. (Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

PAT STEIR
Epically scaled paintings that are more meditative than epic in spirit. Some of the canvases bear gold spatters or prettily corroded fields of green; stronger colors, like red and hard yellow, appear only in bare slivers. The show is dominated by "Blue River," a twenty-six-foot-long painting in watery sheets of blue banked by red and silver. It's the gravitational center of a show whose quiet labors suggest a swimmer's abstracted concentration. Through May 7. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

JAMES WELLING
Welling's rigorous approach to photography often involves a back-to-basics recapitulation of the medium's history through his own clarifying lens. He channels Fox Talbot, Anna Atkins, and Man Ray for twelve photograms of plumbago blossoms that appear to have been conjured out of—and ready to dissolve back into—light itself. Bright, cheery, and defiantly decorative, the flowers are grounded here by Welling's signature series, "Light Sources." The delicate balance of the poetic and the didactic in these black-and-white images of neon, fluorescent, and sun light is tipped in the wrong direction by the works' enormous scale, but their brilliance is hardly diminished. Through May 7. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

Short List

BERTOZZI & CASONI: Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through April 30. **JANE HAMMOND:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through May 3. **MARTIN KIPPENBERGER:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through April 30. **JONAS MEKAS:** Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549. Through April 30. **MARTINA MULLANEY:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through April 30. **ANGELA STRASSHEIM:** Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363. Through April 30.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The spring season begins with a trio of high-energy pieces: Balanchine's Sousa-march medley "Stars and Stripes"; his "Union Jack," set to patriotic and sentimental tunes from the United Kingdom; and Peter Martins's "Barber Violin Concerto," whose serene beginnings accelerate into an antic chase. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. April 26 at 7:30. Through June 26.)

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
The only work new to New Yorkers in this year's BAM season is "Rock of Ages," a short, tender quartet set to Schubert's Adagio in E-Flat. Performed by a different group of dancers each night (all men, all women, a mix of both), the piece shifts subtly in tone with each cast. The program also includes "Somebody's Coming to See Me Tonight" (1995), Morris's sincere take on the nostalgia of Stephen Foster songs, and ends with the endlessly interweaving patterns of "Rhymes with Silver" (1997). The choreographer himself dances in his 2001 sendup of flamenco, "From Old Seville." The music, as always, is live. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 19 and April 21-23 at 7:30. Through April 23.)

DANCE AND MUSIC FROM CAMBODIA
In the new piece "Seasons of Migration," choreographed by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, dancers from Phnom Penh's Royal University of Fine Arts portray the bewilderment felt by gods who descend to live among humans. The season also includes the traditional Cambodian rain-dance drama "Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala." (Joyce Theatre, 219 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 20-22 at 8, April 23 at 2 and 8, and April 24 at 2.)

"UNDER A BIG, BRIGHT, YELLOW SUN"
The Venezuelan-born choreographer Luis Lara Malvacías collaborated on the pieces for his ambitious "metaphorical tour" of Argentina, Peru, and Brazil with dancers from each country. The result is an evening of myth-puncturing visual commentaries, milked for irony: Argentines (regionally famous for their vanity) preen with self-mocking delight, while Brazilians shimmy through a section of sambas, poker-faced. The journey ends with a celebration of New York as melting pot, represented by a ballroom-dance number in which each couple sends up a different step. (Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. 212-674-8194. April 21-24 at 7:30.)

"INFERNO"
The young choreographer Kara Tatelbaum lost virtually all her belongings last year in a devastating apartment fire. During her new solo "Inferno," a deconstructed nineteen-fifties-era fire-safety film flickers behind her as she sits in a chair, batting at the air and thrashing against ropes that bind her legs. But some of the evening's other solos and duets show Tatelbaum's fun side. The solo "Desiderata" starts off shy but builds to exuberant, comic moments, while the wild duet "Best Friend for Sale" is set to original rock music by Deni Bonet, who sings and plays her electric violin at the same time. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 22-23 at 8.)

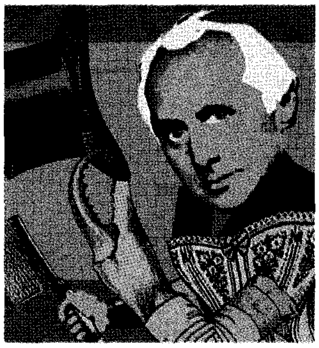
"THREE AT BARUCH"
Under one roof, a handful of companies with a shared taste for the absurd present new and repertory work. Chris Elam's Misnomer Dance Theatre presents "Toes of a Snail," the fantastical fruit of a visit Elam made to Cuba, with live rock music by Rob Erickson. Laura Peterson's stylishly silly "Security" sets Busby Berkeley-style dance formations against a backdrop of surveillance video and French go-go music. And Nicole Berger's entertaining sketch-comedy dance, "Welcome to Birdland," follows a dysfunctional family as it learns how to love from a frivolous flock of well-feathered chorus girls. On April 22-23 at 10:30, a variety hour (hosted by Hedda Lettuce) follows the performances and features door prizes and special guests (e.g., Monica Bill Barnes). (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. Elam: April 20-24 at 7. 212-352-3101. Peterson: April 20 and April 23 at 9 and April 24 at 5. Berger: April 21-22 at 9 and April 24 at 3. 646-312-5073.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE STUDIO COMPANY
The Studio Company doesn't just train tomorrow's ballet stars, it also gives emerging choreographers a chance to try out ideas on some of the country's best young dancers. Both functions converge in the troupe's tenth-anniversary performances at Rose Theatre as it presents premières by Brian Reeder, Jessica Lang, and Jessamyn Lawrence. The grownup scenario of Reeder's "Night Before /Morning After" is a stretch for the young dancers, but they're more than equal to the piece's technical demands. At the gala performance, on April 21, they're joined by alumni who've made good, including Michele Wiles, Danny Tidwell, Herman Cornejo, and Susan Jaffe—who belonged to the Studio Company's previous incarnation, A.B.T. II. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. April 20-21 at 8.)

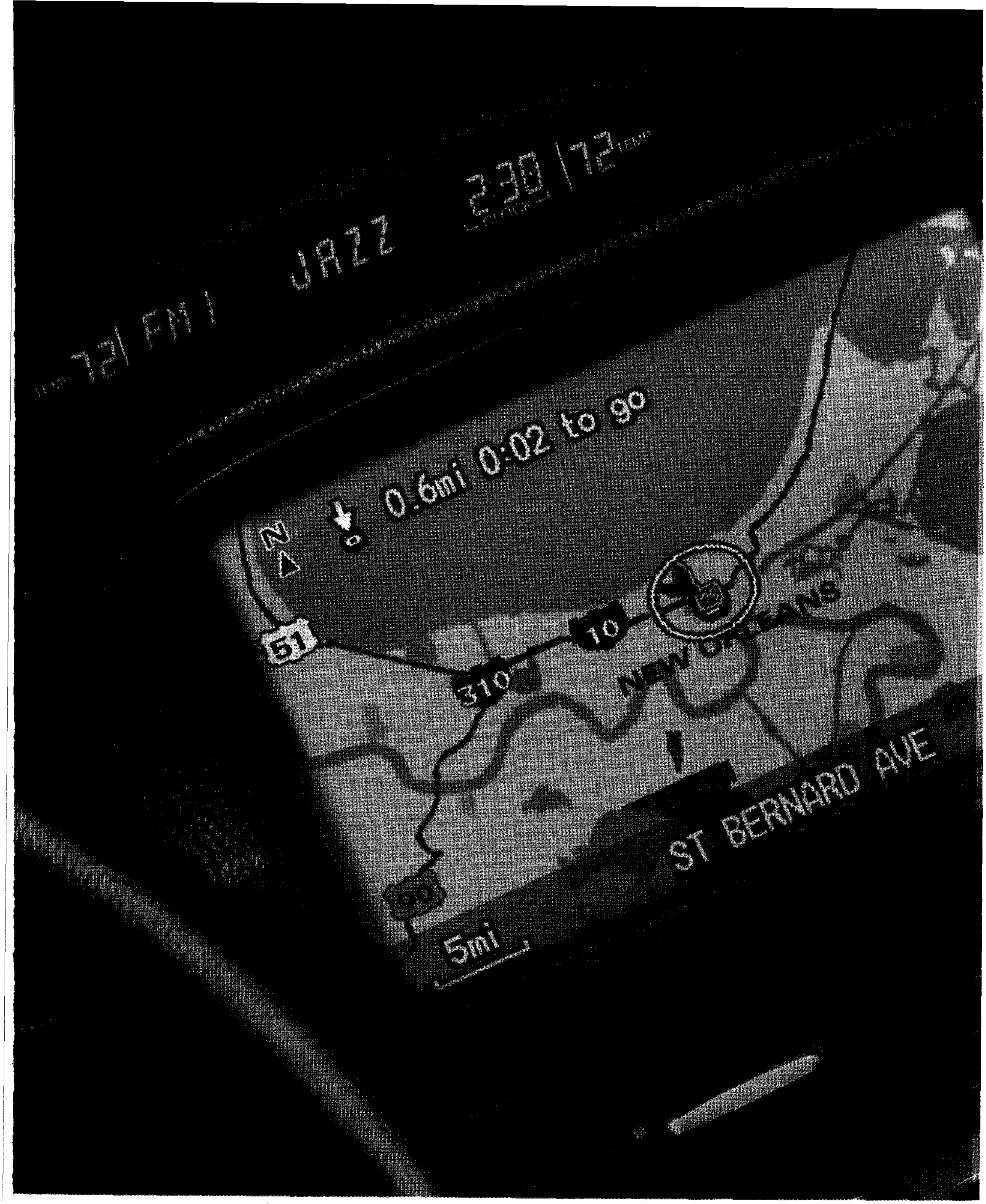
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
TO THE MAX

To call Max Ernst the worst leading painter in the twentieth century's most visually miserable major artistic movement, which he was, is not to dismiss him, as the Met's rambunctious retrospective makes clear. Like blasphemy in religion and obscenity in amour, ugliness in art enchanted the Surrealists, whose devoutly contrarian ideology formed in the bitter wake of the First World War. Ernst, a German veteran of that war, delivered from the start, with strenuously cryptic paintings emulating de Chirico and raffish (if dopey) collages from nineteenth-century engravings. The more graphic his work, the better; he was a terrible colorist, and his textures dishearten. His later techniques for finding images in rubbings and splotches hardly argue for unconscious creativity; they discovered mainly birds, trees, and seashells. Among André Breton's bad boys, attitude counted for at least as much as talent. Blue-eyed good looks and exemplary irresponsibility gained Ernst an enviable parade of women, from Gala Éluard to Peggy Guggenheim to Dorothea Tanning. He died in 1976, at eighty-four.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*



JOHN RITTER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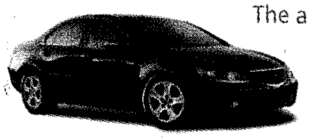

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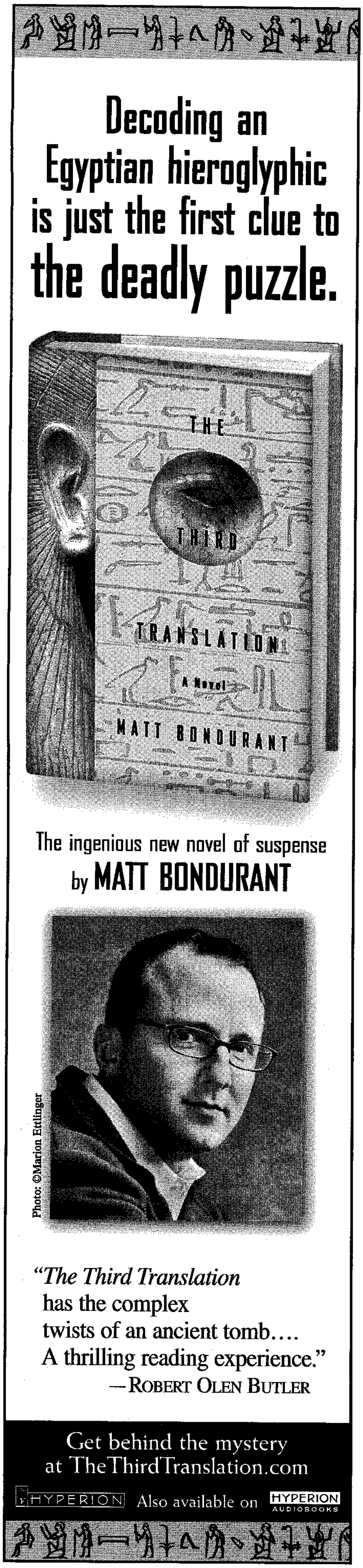
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"FRESH TRACKS"
The long-running series that launched the careers of Molissa Fenley and Bill T. Jones (among others) returns with a slate of choreographers so newly minted that they don't even have their own Web sites. The six dancemakers on the program were selected from sixty auditions, and the evening's excitement derives from the unjaded attitudes they bring to the creative process. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 22-23 at 7:30.)

STREB S.L.A.M.
Elizabeth Streb's acrobatic, madly inventive troupe presents experiments in what they call "PopAction" at the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, in Williamsburg. Highlights: "Gauntlet 2," in which the performers dodge a swinging cement-block pendulum; and "Ricochet," in which they bounce themselves off a Plexiglas wall. (51 N. 1st St. 718-384-6491. April 23 at 7 and April 24 at 3 and 7. Through May 1.)

CLASSICAL NOTES
GETTING COMPOSED

Beware of conductors who compose. They often produce what is known in the business as *Kapellmeistermusik*, or conductor's music, in which interesting orchestration goes in search of original themes. Wilhelm Furtwängler wrote endless quasi-Brucknerian disquisitions, including a seventy-minute-long, brain-emptying Piano Quintet. Lorin Maazel, whose opera "1984" premières next month at Covent Garden, has some high-gloss *Kapellmeistermusik* to his credit. Michael Tilson Thomas recently presented a cycle of Emily Dickinson settings with the San Francisco Symphony, and although he doesn't yet have a distinctive voice he has at least found an elegant and uncluttered style. Leif Segerstam, a Finnish conductor, has generated a hundred and twenty-two symphonies and counting. I'd like to report on them, but life is only so long.

Esa-Pekka Salonen is a different case. Like Igor Markevitch, Leonard Bernstein, and Pierre Boulez before him, he started off as a composer—a lively, edgy one—and moved into conducting more or less by popular demand. In recent years, he has reasserted his composing self, and his new CD, **"Wing on Wing"** (recorded with the Finnish Radio Symphony, not with the L.A. Philharmonic, his home band), shows a big leap forward. Sure, there are echoes: flickering John Adams ostinatos here, Witold Lutoslawski string threnodies there. But they are outnumbered by passages that sound excellently Esa-Pekka-ish: gritty punching rhythms in "Foreign Bodies," spectral chords at the edge of tonality in "Insomnia," a mesmerizing interplay of orchestra, sopranos, and speaking voice (Frank Gehry's) in the deeply impressive title work. All three pieces are confident in form; they stride from A to Z without lingering at J and Q. After "West Side Story," Bernstein lost his genius in a swirl of conducting dates. It's heartening to see Salonen moving steadily in the opposite direction, from curator to creator.

—*Alex Ross*

"PLAY"
Adele Myers and Dancers explore power dynamics among women in a new dance, set to an original score for electric violin and vibraphone performed live by Lyris Hung. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 212-561-6705. April 21-22 at 9 and April 23 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
April 20 and April 23 at 8: Julie Taymor's popular production of **"Die Zauberflöte"** returns for its final performances, with a cast that includes Nicole Heaston, Erika Miklósa, Gregory Turay, Matthias Goerne, René Pape, and Kurt Moll; James Levine conducts. ♦ April 21 and April 26 at 8: Andrei Serban's Brechtian production of Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" may have upset some of the Met's more conservative patrons, but the company has brought the maverick director back for a new version of Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Soile Isokoski, Kristine Jepson, Roberto Alagna, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, and René Pape in the leading roles; Levine. ♦ April 22 at 8: A slimmed-down Deborah Voigt takes the role of Amelia in a revival of **"Un Ballo in Maschera"**; unlike Maria Callas after her dramatic weight loss, Ms. Voigt is vocally better than ever—her intonation remains excellent, her tone solid and deeply affecting. She is joined by an able cast that includes Lyubov Petrova, Marianne Cornetti, Marcello Giordani, and Carlos Alvarez, offering performances that transcend the production's imposing but pedestrian sets and uninspired staging; James Conlon. ♦ April 25 at 7:30: With Youngok Shin, Larissa Diadkova, and Yalun Zhang replacing Petrova, Cornetti, and Alvarez. ♦ April 23 at 12:30: Plácido Domingo, who will return to the company for a May production of Alfano's "Cyrano de Bergerac," sings the role of Siegmund in **"Die Walküre,"** with a largely Russian cast that also includes Olga Sergeeva (in the title role), Katarina Dalayman, Larissa Diadkova, Mikhail Kit, and Stephen Milling; his good friend Valery Gergiev is in the pit. (This is the final performance.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The company presents its final performances of the season. April 20 at 7:30 and April 22 at 8: Like "Carmen," Bizet's **"Les Pêcheurs de Perles"** is a lovely sequence of choral tableaux set in an exotic locale. But this time it's an enervated Sri Lanka, not incendiary Spain, and Bizet's characters float in front of all the pageantry like insubstantial daubs of color. The leading singers—Mary Dunleavy, Yegishe Manucharyan, and especially Stephen Powell—are all good, and Emmanuel Plasson draws out sinuous and delicate sounds from the orchestra; the pleasantly Matissean décor is by the fashion designer Zandra Rhodes. ♦ April 21 at 7:30 and April 23 at 1:30: The Glimmerglass production of **"La Fanciulla del West,"** Puccini's noblest opera, with excellent performances by Stephanie Friede, Renzo Zulian, and Stephen Kechulius in the leading roles; George Manahan, City Opera's music director, conducts. ♦ April 23 at 8: **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Jee Hyun Lim, Kathryn Friest, Marc Heller, and Michael Corvino; Atsushi Yamada. ♦ April 24 at 1:30: Jonathan Eaton's production of **"Carmen,"** with Katharine Goeldner, John Bellemer, Melanie Vaccari, and Malcolm MacKenzie; Gary Thor Wedow. (New York State Theatre. 212-307-4100.)

AMATO OPERA: "CARMEN"
The chamber-opera company, a cultural treasure of the Lower East Side, presents an intimate production of Bizet's Iberian shocker, directed—as always—by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. April 22-23 at 7:30 and April 24 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

COLLEGIATE CHORALE
Robert Bass, the director of this excellent group for twenty-five years, has collaborated with his artistic associate, the actor Roger Rees, to turn the choral-concert genre into a multidisciplinary festival. "A Verdi and Shakespeare Concert" (offered in advance of the Bard's birthday, on April 23) combines performances of arias and ensembles from the composer's Shakespeare operas (including the Act III finale of "Falstaff" and all of Act I of "Otello") with scenes from the plays that inspired them, read by the actors Dana Ivey, Richard Easton, and Rees. Joining the chorale are the sopranos Heidi Grant Murphy and Kallen Esperian, the tenor Lando Bartolini, and the baritone Mark Delavan. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 20 at 8.)

CHANTICLEER: "WOMEN SAINTLY AND OTHERWISE"
America's favorite choral ensemble, thirteen very talented guys from San Francisco, sings a program of music by and about women (including a new work by Augusta Read Thomas) at the Temple of Dendur. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 22 at 8.)

CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The renowned Philadelphia conservatory's ensemble, a farm team for the world's leading orchestras, comes to Carnegie Hall to perform Bartók's "Miraculous Mandarin" Suite, Sibelius's Second Symphony, and the New York première of Richard Danielpour's "In the Arms of the Beloved," a double concerto for violin and cello (with Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson); Michael Stern conducts. (212-247-7800. April 26 at 8.)

RECITALS

KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO
Katharine Hoover's "El Andalus," a work for cello and piano, has its New York première in the eminent ensemble's latest concert, which also includes music by Turina, Mendelssohn (the Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor), and Schumann (the Piano Quintet, with the violinist Soovin Kim and the violist Kirsten Johnson). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. April 19-20 at 8.)

MARILYN HORNE FOUNDATION CONCERTS
Andrew Garland, a baritone in the Seattle Opera's young artists' program, sings a recital of American songs by Jeffrey Wood, Tom Cipullo ("Glances"), Lee Hoiby, and Jake Heggie in the Chapel of St. Bartholomew's Church. (Park Ave. at 51st St. 212-378-0248. April 20 at 6:30.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "THE LAST TIME I SAW PARIS"
Steven Blier accompanies his singers (including the mezzo-soprano Julie Boulianne and the baritone Hugh Russell) in a selection of French song from between the wars; the range is typically wide, including music by Roussel, Poulenc, Weill, and Charles Trenet. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. April 20 at 8.)

PRO MUSICIS FOUNDATION CONCERTS
The guitarists David Leisner and Luiz Mantovani, joined by the flutist Lance Suzuki, offer a concert of music by Walton and Villa-Lobos along with New York premières of works by William Bolcom and Osvaldo Golijov ("Fish Tale"). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 20 at 8.)

ARTEMIS QUARTET
The up-and-coming German ensemble offers works by Mozart, Bartók (the Quartet No. 2), and Schumann (the Quartet No. 3 in A Major). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. April 21 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
April 21-22 at 7:30: Glenn Dicterow, the New York Philharmonic's concertmaster, joins the violinist Mark Peskanov, the pianist Gerald Robbins, and other musicians for the Piano Quintets by Brahms and Shostakovich. ♦ April 23-24 at 3: Peskanov and Robbins offer Beethoven's complete Sonatas for Violin and Piano; each concert is interrupted by a dinner break between 5:30 and 7. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC: "ONLY HUMAN"
A concert of music for instrumental soloists and electronic tape (by Mario Davidovsky, a master of the genre, as well as Arthur Kreiger and John Link) concludes the organization's West Side Festival of New Works; the live players include the violinist Curtis Macomber and the clarinettist Marianne Gythfeldt. (Advent Lutheran Church, Broadway at 93rd St. April 22 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ENSEMBLE 21: BRIAN FERNEYHOUGH
The final "Composer Portrait" concert in George Steel's Miller Theatre season is a tribute to the recondite British modernist, whose music, for all its profligate complexity, is not without a certain charm. The soprano Tony Arnold sings in the American première of "Carceri d'Invenzione," a cycle inspired by the drawings of Piranesi. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. April 22 at 8.)

PIERRE BOULEZ/IRCAM RESIDENCY AT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
A five-day residency with the school's students concludes with a public concert in which the celebrated modernist maestro conducts his "Anthèmes II" (with the violinist Judy Kang) and "Explosante-Fixe." (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 120th St. April 22 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 917-493-4428.)

CRAIG OGDEN
The noted guitarist performs works by Albéniz, Tippett ("The Blue Guitar"), Westlake, and Bellinati. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. April 24 at 11 A.M.)

BRUCE LEVINGSTON: "A MUSICAL PORTRAIT OF CHUCK CLOSE"
Philip Glass's tribute to his longtime artist friend leads off the intrepid pianist's latest concert, which also includes music by Schumann ("Kreisleriana") and Liszt. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. April 25 at 8.)

MOVIES

OPENING

ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening April 22.

THE INTERPRETER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 22. (In wide release.)

KING'S RANSOM
A wealthy businessman arranges his own kidnapping, in a comedy written and directed by Jeff Byrd. Opening April 22. (In wide release.)

A LOT LIKE LOVE
Nigel Cole directed this romantic comedy, which stars Ashton Kutcher and Amanda Peet. Opening April 22. (In wide release.)

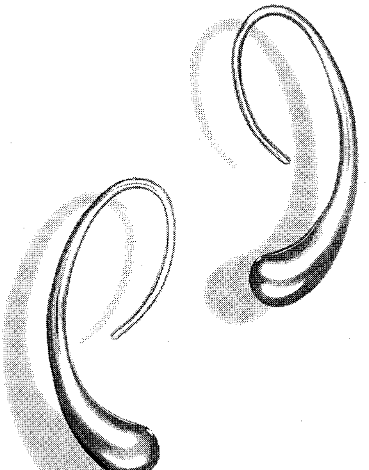
MADISON
A drama about hydroplane racing in a dying Indiana town. With Jim Caviezel and Jake Lloyd. Opening April 22. (In wide release.)

THE MAN WHO COPIED
A Brazilian comedy about a young photocopy-machine operator in love. Directed by Jorge Furtado. In Portuguese. Opening April 22. (Quad Cinema.)

SAVE THE GREEN PLANET
Jang Jun-Hwan directed this Korean comedy, about a man who believes he must save the world from aliens. In Korean. Opening April 20. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

BEAUTY SHOP
Queen Latifah spins off her character from the second "Barbershop" movie, and the resulting effort is even weaker than that mild sequel to the rude, raucous original. Latifah plays a single mother who



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
DANCE, CAMBODIAN

By the late seventies, Cambodian dance was all but wiped out; most of the old master teachers had either fled the country or died at the hands of the

RICHARD MCGUIRE

Khmer Rouge. But those few who came stumbling back to Phnom Penh got the Royal University of Fine Arts started again. In the first new class was Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, who will bring the school's dancers to the Joyce this week, under the title "Seasons of Migration."

The closest thing to Cambodian dance that most Americans know is Jerome Robbins's "Small House of Uncle Thomas," from "The King and I." The real item looks something like that: the templelike headdresses, the lovely butt-out stance, the hands that seem to have twelve fingers. The troupe will present "Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala," an old dance-drama in which the God of Thunder, with a cute little axe, battles the Goddess of Lightning. The new piece, "Seasons of Migration," was created by Shapiro, but you can't tell it from the old one: same deities, slowly, gorgeously telling us their troubles. The subject, Shapiro says, is culture shock. She now lives in Long Beach, California, along with an estimated fifty-five thousand other Cambodians.

—Joan Acocella

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quits her stylist job in a boutique salon in Atlanta and opens her own shop in the hood. She is, as ever, a warm, natural presence onscreen, but the director, Bille Woodruff, has encouraged practically everyone else in the cast—including Kevin Bacon, Alfre Woodard, Andie MacDowell, Mena Suvari, and Keshia Knight Pulliam—to play it as broad as possible, until the enthusiasm devolves into indulgent mugging. The dishing in the shop is neither as funny nor as shocking as it's meant to be; the caricatures of white people, black people, gays, men, and women are distressingly superficial; and the push-button approach to film "entertainment" is truly disheartening.—*Ken Marks* (In wide release.)

THE BEST OF YOUTH
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema Village.)

CHILLY SCENES OF WINTER
John Heard plays a civil servant and Mary Beth Hurt a librarian in this shaggy, engaging anomaly—a brisk, cheerful comedy about depression. Heard lives in a house that he inherited from his grandma and keeps himself amused with quips that would be in-jokes if only he were part of any in crowd. Hurt seems competent and nice, but she's more confused than she looks, and romantic exaltation frightens her. Her love affair with Heard unfolds in flashbacks, as Heard dreams of her in the present, hoping to win her back. Add in Heard's suicidal mother (Gloria Grahame) and a stepfather (Kenneth McMillan) whose favorite topic is Turtle Wax and you've got a recipe for gloominess. But there's nothing petty or mean-spirited about Heard's alienation, and the movie develops its own unique spirit of laughing through exhaustion. No one embodies that spirit better than Peter Riegert, as Heard's best friend, who spends most of the movie in a ratty bathrobe and always finds different ways of doing nothing—he looks absolutely rapt flicking lighted matches into a lamp fixture. Joan Micklin Silver, who wrote and directed this 1979 adaptation of Ann Beattie's 1976 novel, gives the film a distinctive feeling and an unforced sense of humor.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; April 22 and April 24.)

ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM
A mediocre documentary about the rise, fall, and utter disintegration of "the most innovative company in America"—the Houston-based energy outfit that invested in worthless projects, hid its debts in paper companies, colluded with an outside accounting firm, and managed for years to con the press, the financial community, and ordinary investors. There are a few startling moments—the executives Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling rousing Enron employees with inane and fraudulent boasts as the company was falling apart, an audiotape of conversations between Enron electricity traders merrily fleecing the state of California during its energy crisis. But much of the material is familiar, and the director, Alex Gibney, indulges in lazy cinematic sarcasm (staged events, visual divertissements) rather than telling us what we want to know: how the company worked when it was a legitimate firm; when, exactly, it began to go bad; and what the paper "entities" set up by the convicted chief financial officer Andrew Fastow actually did or were supposed to do. Based on the excellent 2004 book by the reporters Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind, who offer lucid commentary in the movie but cannot save it from being a poor substitute for their own hard work.—*David Denby* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

FEVER PITCH
A conventional Farrelly-brothers comedy that plugs into something curious along the way. Jimmy Fallon plays a joke-happy Boston schoolteacher who successfully woos Drew Barrymore's high-flying corporate consultant, only to lose her to his obsession with the Boston Red Sox. The teacher's house, down to the Yankee toilet paper, is a Sox mausoleum; he spends his summers in a box seat passed down by his uncle, surrounded by fans who have been muttering the same curses and masochistic riffs for decades. The Sox fans are like peasants in a defeated province; they revile their conquerors and revile themselves almost as much for being defeated. The filmmakers are split between making the Sox obsession a lovably funny quirk and suggesting that it's haplessly infantile. Plotted against the 2004 season, the movie ends with the team's surprise World Series victory. One doesn't expect a sequel in which Sox fans have come down from the grandeur of endless defeat and are forced to confront the banality of success.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/18/05.) (In wide release.)

A HOLE IN MY HEART
A venal and fractious chamber piece from the Swedish director Lukas Moodysson. Most of it is set in an apartment, where Rickard (Thorsten Flinck), a flabby chunk of self-loathing, is shooting a pornographic film, to the disgust of his teen-age son Eric (Björn Almroth). The starring couple (Sanna Bråding and Goran Marjanović) are equally shaken souls, and their attempts at the blitheness of bodily pleasure grind to a dreadful halt. Indeed, the film works so hard to drain all pleasure from the wells of desire—you see more gynecological surgery than you do actual sex—that you wind up feeling bullied and bored. Despite some overwhelming moments (listen for a grave blast of the St. Matthew Passion), this is a major disappointment from Moodysson, whose last two movies, "Together" and "Lilya 4-Ever," treated the difficult lives of their characters with a tenderness that is brutally absent from his latest work. In Swedish.—*Anthony Lane* (4/11/05) (Cinema Village.)

KING LEAR
The cinema is born of two things, invention and sacrifice. On Easter Sunday, Jean-Luc Godard—as Professor Pluggy, a solitary inventor striving to reinvent the image—makes the petals pop back onto the flowers of spring through the miracle of reverse photography and expires from the effort. Thus is the cinema reborn, the natural order restored—and thus, in the first image of this new cinema, Cordelia (Molly Ringwald) dies, her body stretched on a boulder by the shores of Lake Geneva, as, with his back to her, Lear (Burgess Meredith) beholds the wonders of nature that have made it so. The cinema is born of three things: invention, sacrifice, and mourning. This 1987 film is Godard's maximally pressurized condensation of his great themes: his manifesto of the image; a lost world of artistic culture, and, of course, of cinema; the hazardous bonds of paternity. The casting alone proclaims the magnitude of his ambition: not only Meredith and Ringwald but Norman Mailer and his daughter Kate, Julie Delpy, Woody Allen, and, decisively, Peter Sellars as William Shakespeare, Jr., the Fifth, sent by the Queen of England to rediscover the works of his ancestor, which were lost along with all culture in the wake of Chernobyl. This comic setup mocks the notion of filming "King Lear" as if it were a ready-made screenplay. There is no film of "King Lear"—indeed, no act of art—that is not a rediscovery, no image of nature that is not a resurrection. In English, French, Russian, and Shakespearean.—*Richard Brody* (BAM Rose Cinemas; April 23.)

KONTROLL
This raucous and tender first film by the young Hungarian-American director Nimród Antal is set entirely in the Budapest subway, which is run on the honor system. Antal's heroes are a mangy bunch of inspectors who patrol the trains and platforms, hoping to collect tickets or cash from the passengers, most of whom walk away from them, or spit in their faces, or curse and rough them up. In response to the battering they receive, the men have become wild eccentrics, manic depressives, and brawlers. The movie is not meant to be taken literally; it's a phantasmagoria and a case of American rhythm and pace wedded to a European sensibility—a temperament that tends, for all its dynamism, toward the forlorn, the sardonic, the contemplative. Working without digital painting of any sort (the budget was eight hundred thousand dollars), Antal and his cinematographer, Gyula Pados, sustain moods of foreboding and mad exhilaration mainly through camera movement and lighting. With Sándor Csányi as Bulcsú, the leader of the most likable crew of ticket-takers, a man who wanders around the tunnels when the subway shuts down and eventually does battle with Death itself.—*D.D.* (4/18/05) (Chelsea West and Village East Cinemas.)

KUNG FU HUSTLE
The director Stephen Chow (he also wrote, produced, and stars) assembled this fantastic martial-arts

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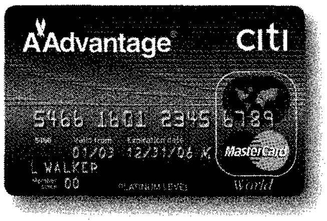

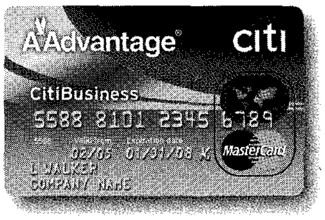

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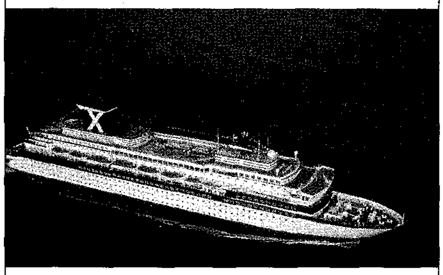

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film as cleverly as Tex Avery approached animation. Characters run down the road at superspeed, take flowerpots to the head without a whimper, and fly through the air deliriously. The plot, about a group of over-the-hill, tenement-living kung-fu masters with superpowers who fight a group of axe-wielding gangsters, is anarchic; the cast of Hong Kong actors is comic perfection, especially Yuen Qiu (who plays a hair-curlered, cigarette-smoking landlady). And there's a vibrant, back-lot-moviemaking feel to the film that never feels labored. The computer-enhanced stunt work is astonishing, but it's Chow's ability to find the humor in his flights of fancy that's truly distinctive.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE LAST MITTERRAND

When François Mitterrand was elected President of France in May, 1981, there was dancing in the streets: it was a victory for both the new Socialist Party and the coming-of-age of the generation of 1968. But Mitterrand, born in 1916, was no man of '68: he himself was of the old French left, and, before that, of the right. The director Robert Guédiguian, best known here for "Marius and Jeannette," unfolds the great man's complexities through the tale of a young journalist (Jalil Lespert) summoned by the aged and dying President (fiercely embodied by Michel Bouquet) in his last days in office. But the journalist has an agenda of his own: to press the statesman for the specifics of his service in the Vichy regime. The callow young man, drawn into dialogue with Mitterrand on matters of deep history, works out, through them, his love life. There is almost constant, often sublime talk, with extremely sharp inside-baseball of French politics and literature—in addition to subtitles, the print should have footnotes—yet the film is never static, stagy, or script-bound. Despite Mitterrand's (and Bouquet's) force of character, the film's most vivid presence is France itself: whether through Chartres from above or within, a factory in ruins, or the sumptuous streets of Paris, Guédiguian reveals a society burdened by its vast history, stretched on the rack of conscience over its wartime responsibility and mourning its dreams of a brighter future. In French.—*R.B.* (Tribeca Film Festival; April 22-23.)

MELINDA AND MELINDA

At dinner with friends in a Greenwich Village restaurant, two playwrights, one tragic (Larry Pine), one comic (Wallace Shawn), offer alternate versions of the same story: Melinda (Radha Mitchell), a distraught young woman, shows up, unannounced, at a dinner party held by old friends and intrudes upon their lives. Mitchell is surrounded by different actors in each version, but it's surprisingly hard to tell the two stories apart. The general atmosphere of both stories and even some of the characters are very similar: both are set in Woodyland, that familiar elegant fantasy version of Manhattan, impeccably furnished, with no brightness, no neon, no pop culture anywhere, and the characters are largely a nattering, trivial, shallowly self-serving bunch. Mitchell is a fine young actress, but Allen pushes her so far into the fidgets that one rather dreads her next appearance. One leaves with such sour thoughts as, The inability to pull oneself together is neither tragic nor comic; it's just a waste of energy. With Will Ferrell, Amanda Peet, Jonny Lee Miller, and Chloë Sevigny.—*D.D.* (3/21/05) (In wide release.)

MOOLAADÉ

The title of Ousmane Sembène's 2004 film refers to the right of sanctuary courageously granted by a woman to four young girls from a village in Burkina Faso who flee their families and refuse to submit to the ritual of clitoral excision. It is hard not to take sides, and the director himself is unambiguous in his sympathies. Despite his evident affection for even the most benighted of the villagers, Sembène, eighty-two years old and the first internationally acclaimed African filmmaker, seems to flatter the Western notions of progress that are making inroads. Yet beware of smugness: Sembène is a dialectician. A pair of matched shots of processions—one of water bearers with tubs on their heads, another of the finely robed elders haughtily convening to pass judgment on the girls' protector—shows that the village's deepest division is not between reason and superstition or men and women but—there as everywhere—between those who toil and those who profit. The film is as politically sophisticated as those of John Ford and Kenji Mizoguchi and makes plain the material necessities that underlie local ways. Yet the rousing finish exalts another element of the will to freedom: the power of romantic love to loosen the bonds of indifferent institutions. In Bambara and French.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 21 and April 23.)

SAHARA

Clive Cussler's franchise novel about the adventurers Dirk Pitt (Matthew McConaughey) and Al Giordino (Steve Zahn) gets the big-bucks treatment in the director Breck Eisner's Indiana Jones-style romp. The overstuffed plot, a Cussler trademark, concerns a missing Civil War ship, a beautiful W.H.O. doctor (Penélope Cruz), and, of course, buried treasure. McConaughey gives Pitt an irresistible masculine charm and energy that helps link the plot together, and Zahn brings a joyous, look-at-me spontaneity to the action. Their performances complement and support each other, and Eisner, who has a great eye for location and detail, keeps the whole whirligig plot turning with lots of pop and lots of corn. A treat.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

SIN CITY

A few strands of melodrama have been pulled from Frank Miller's graphic novels and plaited together—just about—into a coherent comic-strip film. Miller himself co-directs, in collaboration with Robert Rodriguez (plus a little help from Quentin Tarantino), and there is certainly no letup, or pulled punches, in the heightening of style. The movie is in monochrome, splashed with occasional color, and the sheer force of overkill—the ear-crunching sound level, the disturbingly joyful violence—turns a sequence of horrific events into a stream of unfeeling comedy. The cast is a blast, including Bruce Willis, Michael Madsen, Clive Owen, Benicio Del Toro, a bewitching Carla Gugino, and a renascent Mickey Rourke, and most of them enter with sweat and gusto into the spirit of the thing—fortunately so, for without such eagerness the movie would feel merely cruel. What it has to tell us of life, let alone suffering, beyond the savage enchantment of the movies could be written on the head of a bullet.—*A.L.* (4/11/05) (In wide release.)

THE UPSIDE OF ANGER

Joan Allen, lurching into rooms and then speaking with the weird explicitness of an alcoholic trying to maintain control, is Terry Wolfmeyer, a suburban housewife who has been abandoned by her husband; Kevin Costner is Denny Davis, a sheepish retired baseball player whose hand always clutches a beer bottle. She's overdefined; he's undefined; and in the gaps between Terry's faltering attempts to raise her four beautiful, cranky daughters, Terry and Denny have an occasional meeting in bed. This domestic comedy, written and directed by Mike Binder (who performs well as Denny's sleazebag friend), takes its time and establishes a natural rhythm of quarrels, reconciliations, and serious talk. As the rancorous Terry, who can't stop herself from telling people off, Allen blooms into a great angry comedienne. With Evan Rachel Wood, Erika Christensen, Keri Russell, and Alicia Witt as the fab Wolfmeyer girls.—*D.D.* (4/4/05) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

THE AMITYVILLE HORROR: In wide release. **DOWNFALL:** Film Forum (2/14 & 21/05). **HAPPILY EVER AFTER:** Paris. **LOOK AT ME:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas (4/4/05). **MILLIONS:** In wide release (3/21/05). **PALINDROMES:** Angelika Film Center. **ROBOTS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—New York theatrical première. April 20 at 7 and 9: "15" (2003, Royston Tan; in Hokkien and Mandarin). ♦ Films selected by the guest curator David Cross. April 21 at 7: "Together" (2000, Lukas Moodysson; in Swedish). ♦ April 21 at 9:30: "Matewan" (1987, John Sayles). ♦ April 22 at 7 and April 24 at 9:

"Chilly Scenes of Winter" (†). ♦ April 22 at 9 and April 23 at 7: "Badlands" (1973, Terrence Malick). ♦ April 22 at 11: "On Deadly Ground" (1994, Steven Seagal). ♦ April 23 at 4:30: "Local Hero" (1983, Bill Forsyth). ♦ April 23 at 9: "Careful" (1992, Guy Maddin). ♦ April 24 at 3:30: "Sherman's March" (1986, Ross McElwee). ♦ April 24 at 7: "Modern Romance" (1981, Albert Brooks). ♦ "Crossroads: Avant Garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s." April 21 at 8: "The City" (1939, Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke). ♦ April 22 at 8: Short films by Jonas Mekas, Hollis Frampton, and Maya Deren (1946-74). ♦ April 23 at 6: Short films by Leann Bartok (1973-77). ♦ April 23 at 8: Short films by Paul Sharits and Paul Glabicki (1978-79). ♦ April 24 at 6: Short films by Tony Buba (1972-81). ♦ April 24 at 8: Short films by Sheila Chamovitz (1979-87). ♦ "Essential Cinema." April 23 at 3:30: "Strike" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ April 24 at 4: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925, Eisenstein; silent, with Russian intertitles). ♦ "Storefront Films." April 26 at 7:30: "Images of the World and the Inscription of War" (1989, Harun Farocki; in German).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinema Tropical." April 20 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Beyond the Sea" (2003, Lisandro Pérez-Rey; in Spanish). ♦ "Before and After: Jean-Luc Godard." April 21 at 7: "British Sounds" (1969, Godard and Jean-Henri Roger; in French and English). ♦ April 22 at 7: "Détective" (1985; in French). ♦ April 23 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "King Lear" (†). ♦ April 24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "For Ever Mozart" (1996; in French). ♦ April 25 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Hail Mary" (1985; in French). ♦ April 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: Short films by Jean-Luc Godard.

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through May 17: The films of Harold Lloyd. All films are silent. April 20-23 at 1:35, 3:30, 5:25, 7:20, and 9:15: "Safety Last" (1923, Fred C. Newmeyer and Sam Taylor). ♦ April 24-25 at 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, and 9:25: "The Kid Brother" (1927, Ted Wilde and J. A. Howe). ♦ Special event: "Pre-Code Re-Discoveries." April 26 at 2, 6, and 9:20: "Baby Face" (1933, Alfred E. Green). ♦ April 26 at 3:40 and 7:40: "The Sin of Nora Moran" (1933, Phil Goldstone).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Paris Series." April 26 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "An American in Paris" (1951, Vincente Minnelli).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"112 Years of Cinema." April 20 at 5:30: "Ace in the Hole" (1951, Billy Wilder). ♦ April 20 at 7:45 and April 23 at 8: "The Big Lebowski" (1998, Joel Coen). ♦ April 21 at 5:30: "Through the Canadian Rockies" (1915, director unknown; silent) and "Regeneration" (1915, Raoul Walsh; silent). ♦ April 21 at 6: "Citizen Kane" (1941, Orson Welles). ♦ April 21 at 7:30: "I'll Be Seeing You" (1945, William Dieterle). ♦ April 21 at 8:30: "Two Daughters" (1961, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali). ♦ April 22 at 8:30: "The Cat and the Canary" (1927, Paul Leni; silent). ♦ April 23 at 5: "Brute Force" (1947, Jules Dassin). ♦ April 23 at 7:30: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ April 24 at 2: "The Spoilers" (1914, Colin Campbell; silent). ♦ April 24 at 4:15: "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" (1943, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ♦ April 25 at 8: "A Perfect World" (1993, Clint Eastwood). ♦ Première specials. April 20 at 8:30: "Michelangelo's Gaze" (2004, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian) and "The Lady Without Camellias" (1953, Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ "Friday Night at the Movies." April 22 at 4:45: "When We Were Kings" (1996, Leon Gast). ♦ "Sundance at MOMA: Sundance Film Festival Shorts." April 22 at 6: "Short Films, Big Winners." ♦ April 22 at 8:30 and April 24 at 5: "Discovery in Motion." ♦ April 23 at 2: "Flexing the Form." ♦ April 24 at 2 and April 25 at 5: "The Nonfiction Faction." ♦ "Hans Christian Andersen for Grown-Ups." April 23 at 2: "Resurrection of the Little Match Girl" (2002, Sun-Woo Jang; in Korean). ♦ "Louis Feuillade: A Sampling of a Master." April 25 at 6: "Les Vampires: Episodes 1-5" (1915; silent).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Free senior matinées: "Hollywood on the Home Front: Classic Movies from the 1940s." April 20 at 10:30 A.M.: "Cabin in the Sky" (1943, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ Preview screening. April 21 at 7: "Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room" (†). ♦ "Fist and Sword: Martial Arts Film Classics." April 22 at 7:30: "Tai Chi Fist" (1996, Yuen Wo Ping; in Cantonese). ♦ Through May 8: "Candid Cameras: Real Life on Film." April 23 at 2: "Don't Look Back" (1967, D. A. Pennebaker). ♦ April 23 at 4:30: "A Married Couple" (1969, Allan King). ♦ April 24 at 1:30: "Beauty #2" (1965, Andy Warhol). ♦ April 24 at 3: "Rape" (1969, Yoko Ono and John Lennon). ♦ April 24 at 4:30: "Portrait of Jason" (1967, Shirley Clarke). ♦ Repertory nights. April 23 and 24 at 6:30: "Tabu" (1931, F. W. Murnau). ♦ "Spring Recess Family Matinees." April 24 at 12 and April 25-26 at 1:30: "Little Fugitive" (1953, Morris Engel, Ray Ashley, and Ruth Orkin).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. April 22-23: "After Hours" (1985, Martin Scorsese).

THALIA THEATRE

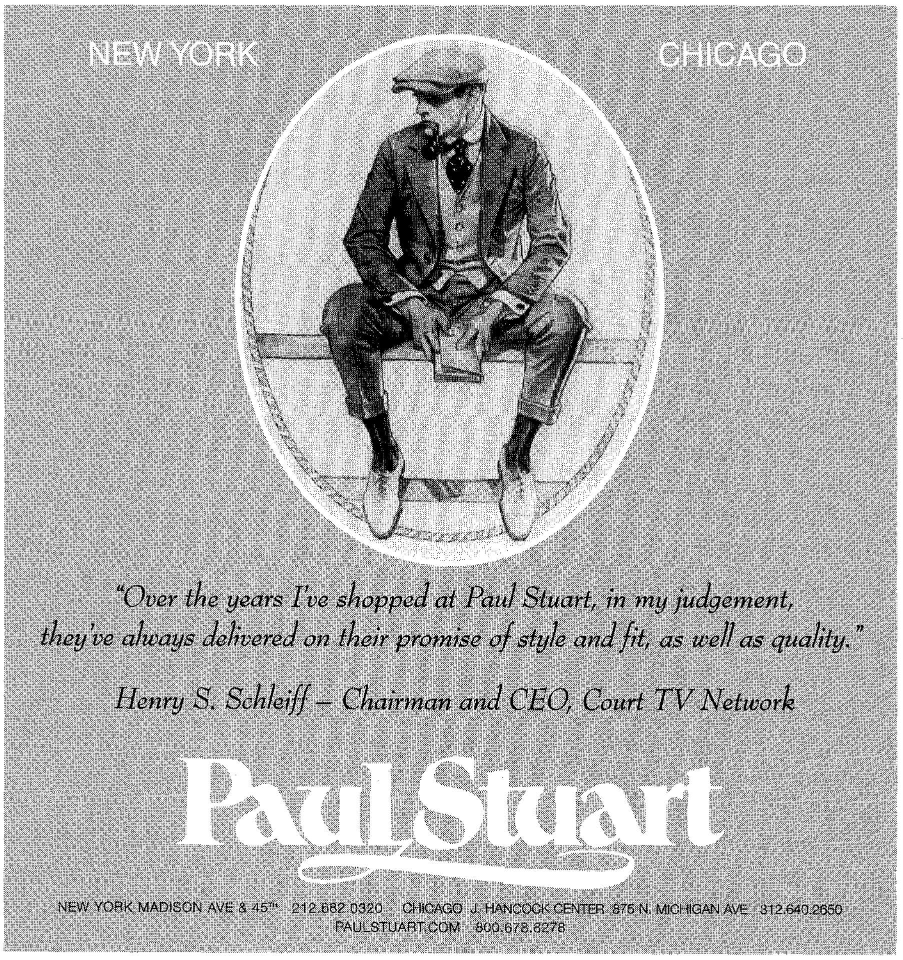
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Reel Rhythms: Music from the Islamic World." April 24 at 2: "Legong: Dance of the Virgins" (1935, Henry de la Falaise). ♦ April 24 at 3:15: "Rasinah: The Enchanted Mask" (2004, Rhoda Grauer; in Javanese and Indonesian). ♦ April 26 at 7: "From Africa to India: Sidi Music in the Indian Ocean Diaspora" (2003, Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy and Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy). ♦ April 26 at 8: "Colours of the Earth" (2004, Shefali Bhushan; in English and Hindi).

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

The festival, which runs through May 1, shows more than two hundred and fifty films at several venues. See www.tribecafilmfestival.org for locations and for a complete schedule. (212-321-7400) Some highlights follow.—April 22 at 6 and April 23 at 1:15: "The Last Mitterrand" (†). ♦ April 23 at 8: "2046" (2004, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese, Japanese, and Mandarin). ♦ April 23 at 9 and April 24 at 9:45: "Mysterious Skin" (2004, Gregg Araki). ♦ April 24 at 7 and April 25 at 4: "Fierce People" (2005, Griffin Dunne). ♦ April 25 at 6 and April 26 at 9:45: "Rize" (2005, David LaChapelle). ♦ April 25 at 9:15: "Asylum" (2005, David Mackenzie). ♦ April 26 at 5:15: "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" (1969, Sydney Pollack). ♦ April 26 at 5:45: "Bearing Witness" (2005, Bob Eisenhardt, Barbara Kopple, and Marijana Wotton). ♦ April 26 at 10: "The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part I: The Moab Story" (2003, Peter Greenaway).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The Twelfth New York African Film Festival. April 20 at 2 and April 22 at 6:15: "Kuxa Kanema" (2003, Margarida Cardoso; in Crioulo and Portuguese). ♦ April 20 at 3:30 and April 23 at 4: "Me and My White Pal" (2003, Pierre Yameogo; in French and Mooré). ♦ April 20 at 6:30 and April 23 at 9:15: "Forgiveness" (2004, Ian Gabriel; in English and Afrikaans). ♦ April 20 at 9:15 and April 24 at 1: "A South African Love Story: Walter and Albertina Sisulu" (2004, Toni Strasburg). ♦ April 21 at 1:30: "Laafi" (1990, Yameogo; in Mooré and French). ♦ April 21 at 3:45 and April 23 at 1:45: "Al'leessi . . . An African Actress" (2004, Rahmatou Keita; in Songhay and French). ♦ April 21 at 6 and April 23 at 6:15: "Moolaadé" (†). ♦ April 21 at 9 and April 26 at 4:15: "Silmande" (1998, Yameogo; in French, Mooré, and Arabic). ♦ April 22 at 4 and April 25 at 9:15: "Wendemi" (1992, Yameogo; in Mooré). ♦ April 22 at 8 and April 24 at 8:15: "The Colonial Misunderstanding" (2004, Jean-Marie Teno; in English, French, and German). ♦ April 22 at 10 and April 25 at 1: "The Hero" (2004, Zeze Gamboa; in Portuguese). ♦ April 24 at 3: "Keepers of Memory" (2004, Eric Kabera; in Kinyarwanda). ♦ April 24 at 5 and



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April 26 at 1: "The Wound" (2004, Nicolas Klotz; in French). ♦ April 24 at 10: "Alhaki" (1998, Usa Galadima; in Hausa). ♦ April 25 at 3: "Born Into Struggle" (2004, Rehad Desai). ♦ April 25 at 5: "Story of a Beautiful Country" (2004, Khalo Matabane). ♦ April 25 at 7: "Keita, the Heritage of the Griot" (1995, Dani Kouyaté; in Jula and French).

READINGS AND TALKS

GEORGE POLK AWARDS SEMINAR
The winners of the most recent Polk honors for excellence in journalism, including the *New Yorker* writer Seymour Hersh and the television commentator Bill Moyers, talk about war and its impact on soldiers beyond the battlefield. (HBO Theatre, 1100 Sixth Ave., at 42nd St. No tickets necessary. For reservations, which are required, call 212-686-5005. April 20 at 5:45.)

SYDNEY POLLACK
The director's new film, "The Interpreter," which stars Nicole Kidman and Sean Penn, opens the Tribeca Film Festival. On April 20 at 6:30, Pollack discusses the thriller with Peter Travers, an editor at *Rolling Stone*. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. For more information, call 212-321-7400.)

CAVE CANEM POETRY PRIZE READING
The nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting emerging African-American poets presents Amber Flora Thomas, the winner of its 2004 prize. Harryette Mullen, the judge of the contest, and the finalists Dawn Lundy Martin and Gregory Pardlo join her. (Poets House, 72 Spring St., 2nd fl. 212-431-7920. April 21 at 7.)

QUEENS COLLEGE EVENING READINGS
The poets Adam Zagajewski, Richard Howard, and Edward Hirsch gather to discuss the art of writing. (Music Building, Queens College, Flushing. For more information, visit www.qc.edu/readings, or call 718-997-4646. April 21 at 7.)

MICHAEL ONDAATJE AND JAMES SALTER
The authors of "The English Patient" and "A Sport and a Pastime," respectively, read selections from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. April 21 at 8.)

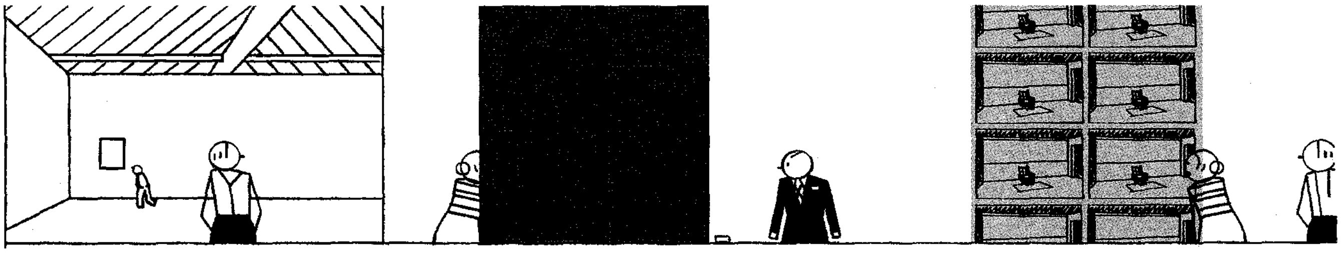
SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE POETRY FESTIVAL
Sharon Olds, Galway Kinnell, Mark Doty, Thomas Lux, and many other poets visit Bronxville for three days of readings. (For more information, visit www.slc.edu. April 22-24.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE REJECTION SHOW"
This monthly series highlights the flotsam and jetsam of the New York City cultural-entertainment complex by offering audiences a chance to see material that has been turned down by major publications and television networks. This installment's participants include Mike Daisey (the author of "21 Dog Years," an account of his time working at Amazon.com), Sara Schaefer (a comedian and the host of a biweekly live talk show called "Sara Schaefer Is Obsessed with You"), Jane Borden and Susanna Hegner (a pair of freelancers who've written jokes for "Saturday Night Live" 's "Weekend Update"), and the *New Yorker* cartoonists P. C. Vey, Glen LeLievre, and Matt Diffee. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. April 20 at 8.)

"THE DOWNTOWN SEDER"
Michael Dorf, the downtown impresario who founded the Knitting Factory, has gathered a number of artists and musicians to commemorate the Israelites and their exodus from slavery in Egypt. The pre-Passover evening, which he describes as "one-half class, one-half show," features thirty performers, including the guitarist Dan Zanes, the clarinettist David Krakauer, the singer-songwriter Jill Sobule, and the guitarist Uri Caine, as well as the comedians Judy Gold, Eric Drysdale, and Lewis Black. A full kosher dinner will be served. "The Haggadah says, 'Tell the story in a language you can understand,' " Dorf says. "I'm using the language of the arts." (48 Wall St., at William St. 212-608-0555. April 21 at 6:30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
At **Sotheby's**, a sale of nineteenth-century European art works (April 20) includes Victorian fairy scenes by Hughes ("Midsummer Eve") and Husskisson and a chastely sombre moonscape by Grimshaw, but at its heart are a group of sentimental academic paintings by Bouguereau, four of which came from the Upper East Side town house of Gianni Versace. A sale of Russian art (April 21) features a collection of Fabergé figures of classic Russian types (a boyar, a peasant, etc.) and a visionary landscape scene by Roerich ("She Who Leads"). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ A sale of musical instruments at **Christie's** (April 22) includes the odd accordion or trombone, but string instruments dominate; the star, naturally, is Maestro Stradivari of Cremona, represented by the "Lady Tennant," a violin crafted in 1699 that was once the property of the French violinist (and Paganini rival) Charles Philippe Lafont. A sale of photographs follows on April 26. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



LAURENT CILLUFFO

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
TRIBUTE TO SONTAG

May 10-12

Susan Sontag wrote extensively on film and was an early booster of Godard and Bergman. BAM is showing films that reflect Sontag's passions, including Josef von Sternberg's "The Devil Is a Woman" (which featured prominently in "Notes on Camp"), Godard's short film "Je Vous Salue Sarajevo" (Sontag, too, was preoccupied with Bosnia), and even Andy Warhol's screen tests of Sontag herself. (BAM Rose Cinemas. 718-636-4100.)

ART
WARHOL AT THE DIA

May 15-April, 2006

There's yet another worthy Andy Warhol show, this one at the Dia Foundation in upstate New York. "Dia's Andy: Through the Lens of Patronage" includes paintings from the 1963 "Disaster" series and the 1976 "Skulls" series, time capsules, an installation of "Brillo Boxes," and various portraits, and it will hang against Warhol-designed wallpapers. The show coincides with the tenth anniversary of the Warhol Museum, in Pittsburgh. (Beacon, New York. 845-440-0100.)

NIGHT LIFE
GANGING UP

May 17-18

The post-punk band Gang of Four is touring with its original lineup for the first time since 1981. The band's jagged approach has influenced countless contemporary bands, including the Futureheads, the Rapture, and its opening act, Radio 4. (Irving Plaza. 212-777-6800.)

THE THEATRE
"HECUBA" AT BAM

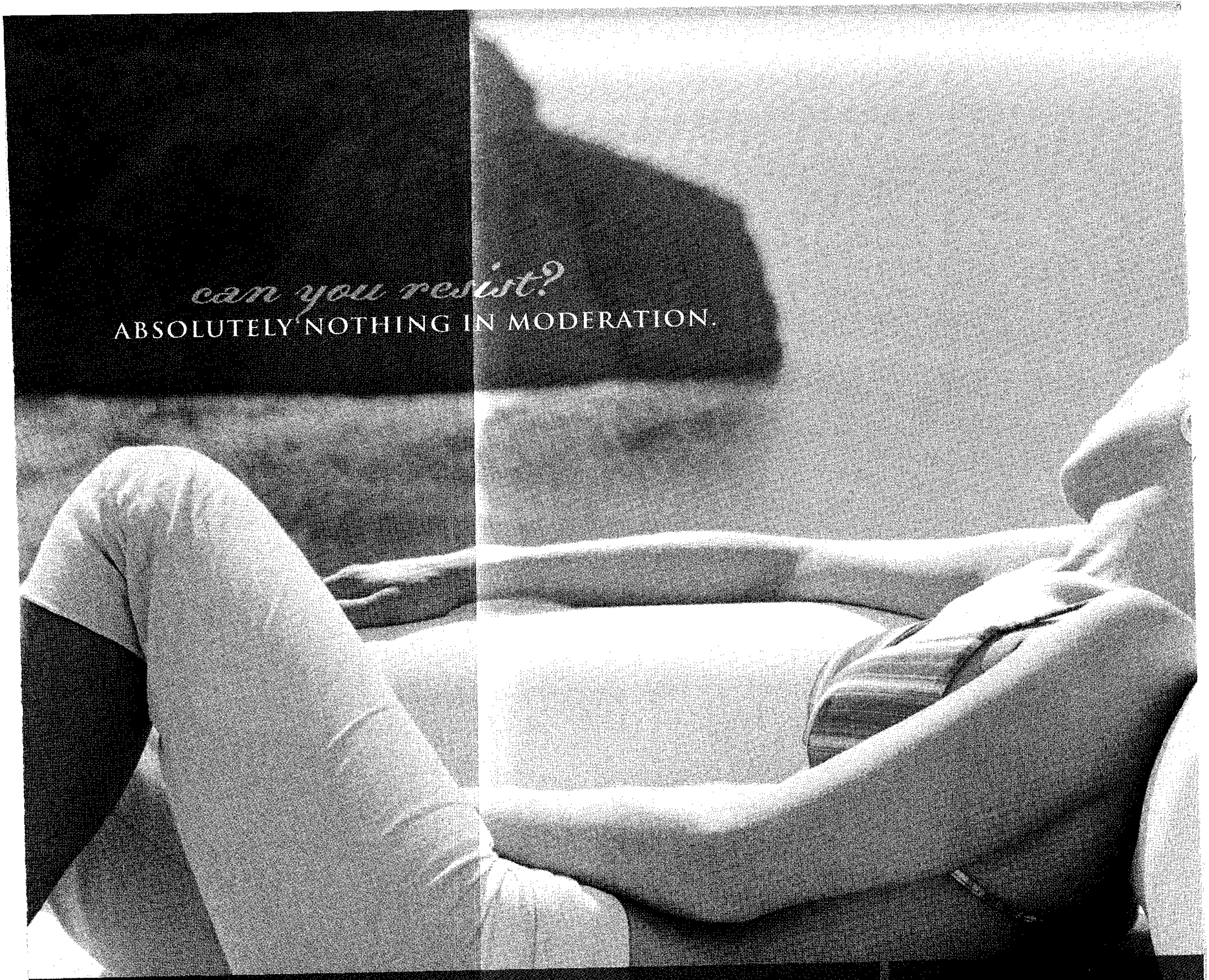
June 16-26

Vanessa Redgrave tackles Euripides' tragedy, which finds the former Queen of Troy brought before Agamemnon as a prisoner of war. (BAM Opera House, 30 Lafayette St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SINGING DONIZETTI

July 1-Aug. 23

"Lucie de Lammermoor," Donizetti's slimmed-down French version of the opera you know as "Lucia di Lammermoor," opens at Glimmerglass Opera. Most of the good Glimmerglass shows eventually make their way to the New York State Theatre, but the intimate Alice Busch Opera Theatre offers a far more compelling experience. (Cooperstown, New York. 607-547-2255.)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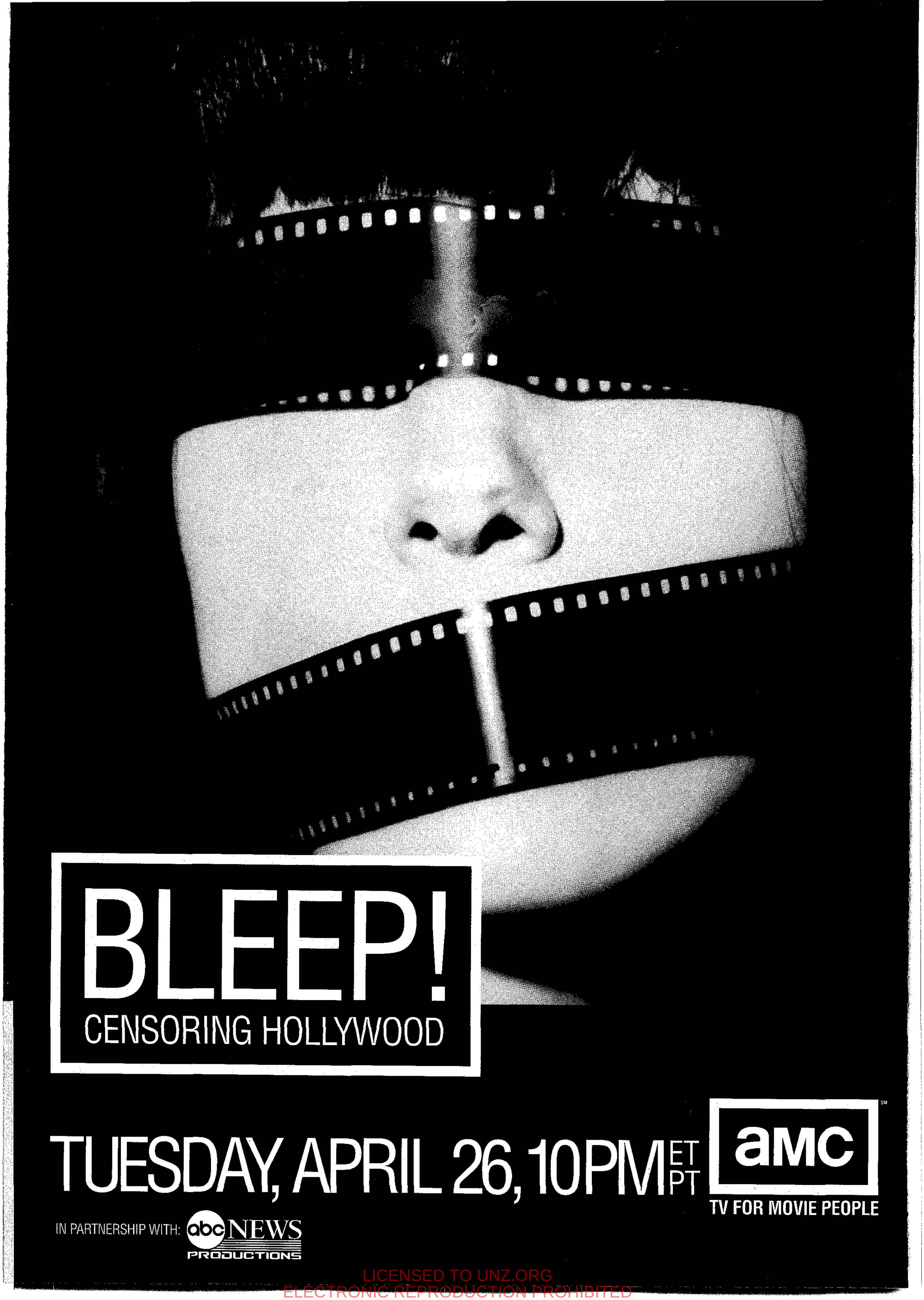
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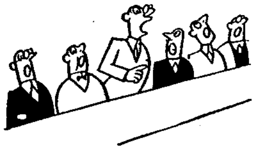
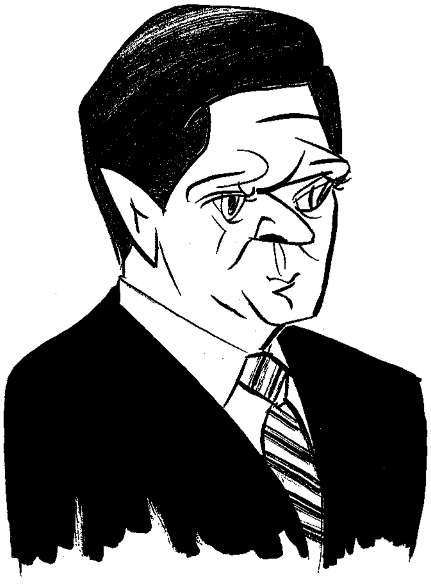


A current Washington joke, in the mordant style that used to be a Moscow specialty, has it that Republicans and Democrats have finally found something they can agree on: Tom DeLay must stay as the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives.

The DeLay Must Stay movement, like all popular fronts and uneasy alliances, brings together participants of varying motives. Republican members want to continue being led by the Texas bug exterminator turned hard-right Christianist crusader because they agree with him on the great political and religious issues of the day; because he is nice to them, feeding them pizza when they have to work late and finding places for the smokers among them to indulge without having to shiver on the Capitol steps; because they are terrified of him, on account of his well-deserved reputation for vengefulness; because he saved them from losing House seats in the 2004 election by persuading Texas to adopt a precedent-breaking mid-decade gerrymander that netted their party an overall gain of three seats; because he has raised millions for their campaigns, mostly from business interests that have reaped billions and expect to reap billions more from the policies he promotes; and because, using threats and inducements, he has insured that the choicest, highest-paying, most enviable lobbying jobs on Washington's K Street corridor go overwhelmingly to Republicans in general and DeLay loyalists in particular. Democrats don't mind if DeLay stays a while, because he is so repellent. Self-righteous, humorless, resentful, scowling, perpetually angry, he has many of the irritating qualities of his former colleague Newt Gingrich without any of the latter's childlike charms. (There are no DeLay equivalents of Gingrich's boyish enthusiasms for dinosaurs, sci-fi fantasies, and big, shiny theories of History.) And then there are the scandals, which cling to the Majority Leader like flakes of dandruff.



DeLay's ethical lapses center on campaign-finance chicanery, with sidelines in petty nepotism and lavish trips to exotic locales near golf courses. The details tend to be numbingly dull—there are no Monicas or burglaries to spice them up—but the lapses themselves are real enough. Last year, three of them attracted the attention of the House ethics committee, which formally (though toothlessly) "admonished" him, making him one of only three representatives, and the only repeat offender, to be disciplined in the past three years. DeLay has since had the three most unreliable Republicans removed and replaced with stooges, and the ethics committee has devolved from torpid to moribund. But various newspapers (not just bastions of the coastal "liberal media" like the *Times* and the Washington *Post* but also red-state gazettes like the *American Press,* of Lake Charles, Louisiana) have continued to make inquiries, as has the (Democratic) district attorney for Austin, Texas, Ronnie Earle, who has already indicted three of DeLay's closest associates and eight of their corporate donors. So far, only one serving Republican congressman—Christopher Shays, of Connecticut—has openly called upon DeLay to give up his leadership post. But cracks are beginning to appear in the outer wall. "DELAY MUST GO" was the title last week of an editorial in the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

staunchly Republican Richmond *Times-Dispatch*. The editorialists of the *Wall Street Journal*, who last year dismissed ethics criticisms of DeLay as "amusing," now write sternly, "Mr. DeLay, who rode to power in 1994 on a wave of revulsion at the everyday ways of big government, has become the living exemplar of some of its worst habits." The headline on that one was "SMELLS LIKE BELTWAY."

What is most odiferous about DeLay, however, is not his Tammany-like antics but his Torquemada-like ones. The current fuss reached the boiling point on March 31st, when, after the body of Terri Schiavo was allowed to expire, DeLay—in a prepared statement, not an off-the-cuff remark—warned ominously, "The time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior, but not today." The anodyne interpretation of this is that DeLay was talking about the hereafter, where various members of the Florida and federal judiciaries, having died of presumably natural causes, will stand before their Maker, who will proceed to drop-kick them into the fiery pit. Some observers, noting the recent spate of actual, attempted, and threatened assassinations of judges, perceived a touch of this-worldly incitement; Senator Frank Lautenberg, of New Jersey, suggested that DeLay might have violated a statute outlawing such threats against federal judges.

Meanwhile, as new ethics allegations surfaced, DeLay huddled with colleagues from the other body for a strategy session. According to the Associated Press:

> His private remarks to Senate Republicans were in keeping with the response frequently offered on his behalf by House Republicans: Blame the Democrats and occasionally the news media for the scrutiny he faces. House Republicans intend to follow the script later in the week, hoping to showcase passage of bankruptcy legislation and estate tax repeal as a counterpoint to Democratic charges that they are merely power-hungry.

The hope, evidently, was to deflect charges of being merely power-hungry by inviting charges of being—on behalf of wealthy contributors—merely money-hungry. (The bankruptcy bill, which has since passed, is a gift to the banking and credit-card industries; estate-tax repeal, still pending in the Senate, would be an even bigger gift to the superrich.) Where DeLay is concerned, at least, the ploy hasn't worked. Gingrich, of all people, has now called upon DeLay to account for himself. ("DeLay's problem isn't with the Democrats," the former Speaker told the "CBS Evening News" last week. "DeLay's problem is with the country.")

Finally, last Wednesday, DeLay expressed regret for the style of his March 31st remarks. "I said something in an inartful way, and I shouldn't have said it that way, and I apologize for saying it that way," he said at a news conference. No apologies for the substance, though. "I believe in an independent judiciary," he said, and went on to explain what he meant: "We"—Congress—"set up the courts. We can unset the courts. We have the power of the purse." He declined to say whether the judges in the Schiavo case should be impeached, though that particular remedy for "judicial activism" is one that he has been advocating since 1997.

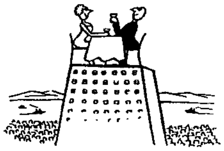
Earlier that day, DeLay had given an interview to the Washington *Times*, the far right's daily organ in the capital. For the most part, he was careful to avoid getting himself in more trouble. "I'm not sure I want to go there," he said in answer to a question about which bits of the government he'd like to abolish. And, to a question about Israeli settlements in the West Bank: "You're not going to get me in a fight with the President." But when asked who is to blame for "activist judges," he was jaw-droppingly candid:

> I blame Congress over the last fifty to a hundred years for not standing up and taking its responsibility given to it by the Constitution. The reason the judiciary has been able to impose a separation of church and state that's nowhere in the Constitution is that Congress didn't stop them. The reason we had judicial review is because Congress didn't stop them. The reason we had a right to privacy is because Congress didn't stop them.

So there you have it, the DeLay agenda: no separation of church and state, no judicial review, no right to privacy. Next to this, the President's effort to repeal the New Deal social contract by phasing out Social Security is the mewing of a kitten. DeLay may stay or DeLay may go. But the real danger is not DeLay himself. It's DeLay's agenda. It's his vision. It's his "values."

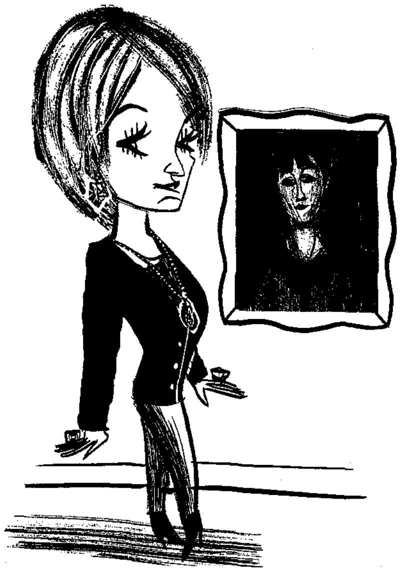
—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

HOUSEKEEPING
ELLEN BARKIN AT HOME



Last week, Ellen Barkin was flitting around town promoting "Palindromes," a new movie directed by Todd Solondz, in which she plays the unctuous mother of a pregnant thirteen-year-old girl. Simultaneously, she was carrying on her real life, as a wife (to Ronald Perelman, the Revlon billionaire) and mother (to two children from her previous marriage, with Gabriel Byrne, and to two stepkids), in the Perelmans' five-story town house in the East Sixties. On Monday morning, she was at home, looking trim in a couple of layered T-shirts worn under a saffron-colored hand-knit cardigan, snug jeans, and brown Christian Louboutin boots with tall, spiky red heels. "I have four herniated disks," she said, flashing her squinty eyes. "With a bad back, it's easier to walk on high heels." She was also wearing big diamond earrings and two rings—a vintage Deco diamond on her right hand and a wedding band of diamonds set with a rose-cut nineteenth-century JAR diamond on her ring finger—along with a briolette diamond pendant on a platinum-and-diamond chain. "I sleep in them," she said, as she toured the premises with a visitor. She checked in with a driver in the foyer (one of Andy Warhol's famous Maos hung on the wall), nodded to various security men, and consulted with two housekeepers and a chef. She paused in a small sitting room. It had a flat-screen TV on the wall. "The children aren't allowed to have television in their rooms; we all watch in here," she said. "We also have four dogs—a miniature Yorkie, a Maltese, a Wheaten terrier, and a King Charles spaniel. And," she added cheerfully, "I hate them all." The Yorkie, named Scruffy, blew frantically into the room and jumped into her arms. He was impeccably groomed, and he wore a pink leather collar. "My daughter, Romy Byrne, wants him to be a *her*, in pink," Barkin said. "Romy is twelve, laid back, listless. She'll look at you like this." Barkin slouched back, flopped her arms, pantomimed an imitation of her daughter, just as Romy herself, listless, very pretty, with long light-brown hair, sauntered in, a perfect reflection of her mother's impersonation. After being introduced, she sauntered out with Scruffy. "Romy is beautiful," Barkin said matter-of-factly, but with a corner-of-the-mouth grin. "My fifteen-year-old son, Jack, is sweet. He's a guitarist, who reads only books from the nineteen-sixties and before, and listens only to music from the sixties and before, but Romy is like all the girls who would never speak to me in high school."

The tour continued. "All the beautiful French modern furniture you see here now is the replacement of what I found when I first came to live here, six years ago," she said. "The house was full of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian furniture. Everything was gold. Ronald and I lived together for a year before we got married. After another year with all the gold furniture and gold carpets and gold walls and gold floors, and the dining room all done in navy-blue cashmere, I got to work. It was easy. I had eight billion dollars to spend. When I came, there was no kitchen to speak of. Now we have a huge kitchen with a wall of refrigerators—one dairy, one meat. Ronald is one-hundred-per-cent kosher. I make the brisket on Passover." Laughing, she said, "Ronald has me buy the meat from a kosher butcher shop where everything costs three times as much."



Ellen Barkin

She went on, "The first piece of furniture we bought was for Ronald's bedroom, a Gio Ponti desk and the old matching chair." She pointed them out in the bedroom. At one end stood a high, king-size bed, done up in white Pratesi linens. "All the little kids like to sleep with us—Patricia's ten-year-old, Caleigh, and my Romy," Barkin said. "Today, Ronald and I are ninety-nine per cent in agreement about all the furniture and stuff in the house. I'm home alone so much—I love to sit with a book in the living room. I sit there and read and look at what's on the walls. That Modigliani!" She pointed to the wall opposite the entrance to the living room (about the size of a Versailles ballroom), to the famous "Tête de Jeune Fille (L'Italienne)." "It was the first thing I saw on the walls when I first came here," she said. "I said to Ronald, 'Are you joking me?' I can sit for hours in the library or in the living room and look at the Picassos, the Matisses, the Lichtensteins, the Mirós, the de Koonings, the Rothkos.

"Before Ronald, I never dated a man who wore a suit and tie. Ronald used to put on the suit and tie to go to his office, even though it's here—he goes out the back door to his office building across the courtyard. Now he just wears a cashmere sports jacket." She said, "I met Ronald at a party, when he came up to me and asked me for a date. Then he kept leaving messages for me on the machine. Finally, I went to dinner with him. What was I doing with him? I was afraid he would be one of those megalomaniac guys who would bore me to death. He came from Philadelphia. I came from the Bronx and Queens. My father was a Fuller Brush man. Ronald lived in a big house. He went to private schools." She pointed to a marble table. On it was a book about two feet square. On the cover was a photograph of a cute, solemn-faced thirteen-year-old wearing a dark suit and a yarmulke. It was entitled "Ronald's Bar Mitzvah. January, 1956." "I found it in the basement and brought it up here to be with the other pictures," she said.

Near the dining room—which holds a long, polished Ruhlmann table seating twenty-four ("Sometimes, for the Seder, we squeeze in up to twenty-eight," she said)—is a bookshelf piled high with yarmulkes. "Look at this," Barkin said, and pulled from under the yarmulkes a book of writings by Allen Ginsberg. She patted the yarmulkes and patted the book of poems. "There you have it, Ronald and me," she said.

She went on, "I told Ronald, 'I don't understand anything you do.' He said, 'You're smart. You'll learn.' I said, 'I'm forty-five. I'm already who I am.' I was very concerned about the effect of all of it on my kids. As it is, my kids don't even like my being in the entertainment business. They find it embarrassing. But Ronald is down to earth."

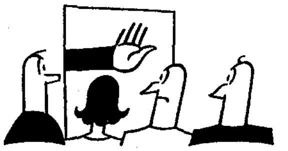
She stopped herself suddenly, looking alarmed. "My class!" she said. "I teach an acting class this afternoon, down at the Actors Studio Drama School at the New School."

She grabbed a brown crocodile Birkin bag ("Ronald got it for me"), heavy with books and papers, added a can of Diet Coke, two bottles of Evian, and a package of Twizzlers to the lot, and got into her waiting sedan. Half an hour later, she chomped on a Twizzler and listened intently as two students did a scene from Ionesco's "The Lesson." At the end of it, she looked disappointed. She tried to explain to the students what they were doing wrong. "When you do one of those absurdist plays," she said firmly, "you still have to find the emotional core."

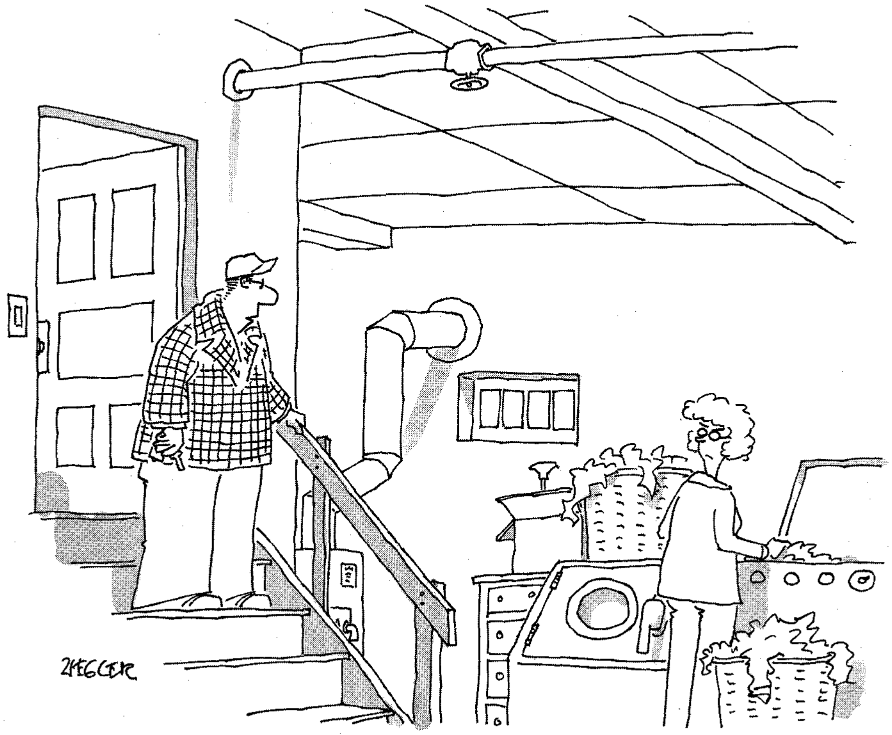
—Lillian Ross

ON SECOND THOUGHT

SECRET GARDEN



It seems difficult to imagine that the owners of Madison Square Garden, who refer to it, rather boisterously, as the World's Most Famous Arena, would object to the release of a documentary about the Garden that had been filmed, with their consent and coöperation, by one of the world's most acclaimed directors. But then these owners—the Dolan family, under the aegis of the Cablevision Systems Corporation—are an odd lot, evidently as fond of discord as they are leery of the bad press that arises from it. And the director, Frederick Wiseman—who made such withering documentaries as "Titicut Follies" and "Hospital"—certainly has a history of inspiring



"Walking down here and asking if I can get you some more detergent from the store is just the beginning of my fence-mending agenda."

• •

"The Garden" its American première on the afternoon of January 22nd, and the movie was scheduled to be shown soon thereafter at a retrospective in Vienna, at the Berlin Film Festival, and, in March, on PBS.

After a couple of weeks, Wiseman got a letter from a Garden attorney, Robert Brandon, saying that the company would withhold permission for its release unless Wiseman agreed to make some changes. The lawyers wanted him to cut dialogue from the management-meeting scenes, on the ground that it revealed proprietary information about business strategy. "They only wanted a few lines removed, but they were the kinds of lines that would have made all the scenes meaningless," Wiseman explained. (One disputed line, delivered by Robert Russo, then the general manager of the Garden: "In the labor negotiations I would like you to think outside the box.") When discussions between the two sides went nowhere, the Garden made it plain that Wiseman had to withdraw his movie from Sundance—and everywhere else he planned to show it—or face the prospect of a lawsuit. Cablevision can be a stubborn and litigious adversary; it has, for example, spent millions of dollars to fight the New York Jets' proposed two-billion-dollar stadium on the far West Side of Manhattan. "I couldn't afford that kind of legal battle," Wiseman said.

Wiseman withdrew "The Garden" from Sundance the night before the première, citing "unresolved issues" between him and the Garden. He also pulled it from Vienna and Berlin. So far, aside from Garden management, only a handful of curators and critics have seen it. "It's an homage, really," said Christoph Huber, a film critic for *Die Presse*, a daily newspaper in Vienna, who saw it on videocassette. "It makes no sense to me at all that Madison Square Garden wouldn't want it shown."

It is also more than three hours long, seven years out of date, and, by Michael Moore standards, a little slow, and therefore unlikely to find a wide audience outside the festival circuit. Still, the Garden apparently continues to object to its release, citing, in an official statement, "certain matters that were to have been discussed between the parties prior to the film's exhibition" and saying that "that process has yet to be completed."

what you might call coöperation regret.

More than a decade ago, Wiseman had the idea of chronicling the goings on at the Garden. "I'd always been fascinated by this place where so many different forms of entertainment came together under one roof," Wiseman, who is seventy-five, explained last week. "Hockey, basketball, wrestling, the circus—it's unique in American culture." In 1997, Wiseman made a formal approach to an acquaintance who had become a Garden executive. Before long, David Checketts, who was the Garden's chief executive at the time, and who was not familiar with Wiseman's work, signed off on the idea and granted him full access. During February and March of 1998, Wiseman, under the watchful eye of the Garden's P.R. chief, Barry Watkins, shot more than a hundred hours of 16-mm. footage, recording the bustle and tedium surrounding such events as the N.B.A. All-Star game, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, and the Westminster dog show, as well as Rangers and Knicks games.

The result, which is called, with characteristic concision, "The Garden," is standard-issue Wiseman cinéma vérité: clever juxtapositions forming a subtle commentary on American life, no narration necessary. The film opens with a four-minute sequence of circus elephants parading through the streets of New York at night, on their way into the Garden; the viewer, once inside, almost never leaves, except for occasional exterior shots of homeless people and passersby. We see employee training sessions, locker-room meetings, cat-show preparations, and, in painstaking detail, the process of converting the Garden floor into a sheet of ice for a hockey game.

Wiseman's cameras also capture three closed-door meetings in which Garden management discusses its strategy for labor negotiations. These sequences were apparently what jarred Garden executives after Wiseman sent them a videotape of the movie, last November. Back in 1997, Wiseman had agreed in writing that the Garden would have final approval over the film, although the contract, he said last week, stipulated that approval could not be "unreasonably withheld" and had to do only with issues of confidentiality. Wiseman needed the Garden to sign off on the movie within weeks; the Sundance Film Festival was planning to give

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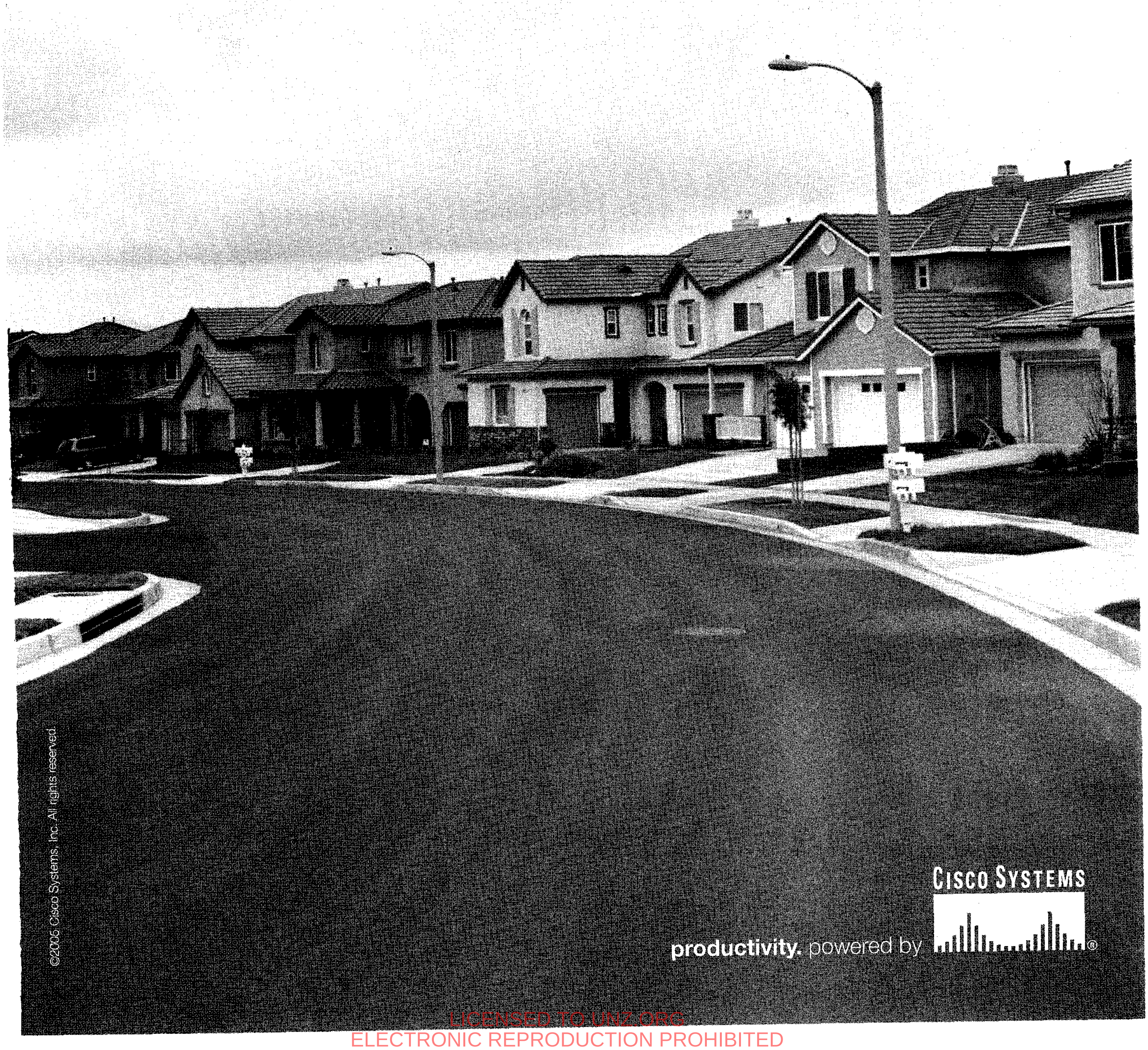

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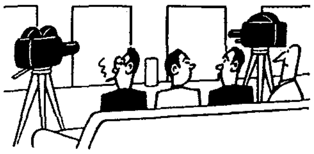
There also seems to be some dispute over who was responsible for obtaining permission from the various teams, leagues, and performers who appear in the film. One theory, advanced by a former Garden executive who knows the byzantine inner workings of the place, is that James Dolan, the C.E.O. of Cablevision and the chairman of the Garden, learned of the movie and, without having seen it, ordered that it be made to go away. Wiseman believes that, among Garden executives, only Barry Watkins and Robert Brandon have watched the movie from beginning to end, and, he added, "I'm guessing they probably fast-forwarded through a lot of it."

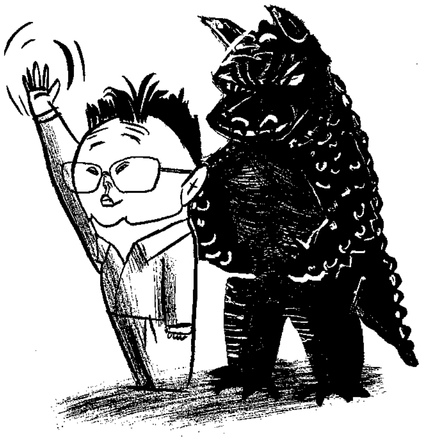
It is unusual for Wiseman to give a subject the right to view and approve a film he is making. After the release, in 1967, of "Titicut Follies," a documentary about frightening conditions at the State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, questions were raised in the state legislature about how Wiseman got permission to film the inmates, and Elliot Richardson, who was then the Massachusetts Attorney General, and who had originally approved the film, got a restraining order that prevented the film from being shown publicly. That decision wasn't overturned until 1992, by which time Wiseman had wormed his way into dozens of American institutions with his 16-mm. camera and had been richly rewarded by critics for doing so. Wiseman has never cut anything from his films at the request of a subject. As for what will happen to "The Garden," he said, "I honestly don't know. All I know is that I made a movie and I want the public to see it."

—*David Blum*

THE PICTURES
A KIM JONG IL PRODUCTION



When the South Korean director Shin Sang Ok was told recently about the upcoming New York première of his 1985 film, "Pulgasari," he was as perplexed as he was pleased. He didn't seem to mind that no one had thought to invite him; rather, he was delighted that someone had managed to find a print. "Pulgasari" was the last movie Shin directed before he escaped from North Korea, where he lived for eight years after being kidnapped by Kim Jong Il, who wanted to try his hand at producing movies. Aside from brief runs in Seoul and Tokyo, "Pulgasari" has seldom been seen, except by the kind of people who troll the Web for bootleg copies of any movie remotely associated with "Godzilla," from which "Pulgasari" draws inspiration. So it is that "Pulgasari" 's New York début comes at the end of a yearlong "Godzilla" festival organized by the Japanese culture center at Columbia.



Kim Jong Il with Pulgasari

Shin is seventy-nine and lives in Inchon. Over the telephone the other day, he was happy to talk about his time in North Korea and his collaborations with the Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il, a legendary movie buff. Shin was regarded as one of the finest filmmakers in South Korea when, in 1978, North Korean agents kidnapped his wife, the actress Choi Un Hui, and then, when he went searching for her, Shin himself. Kim Jong Il viewed Shin as a key part of his plan to become the Irving Thalberg of the East. He wanted Shin to make movies for him. Shin refused and was jailed. When at last, after five years, Shin was freed, Kim Jong Il told him that he could make any movies he liked.

Kim was eager to broaden North Korean cinema beyond such titles as "The County Party Chief Secretary" and "The Fate of a Self-Defense Corps Man." He gave Shin a studio that, in time, employed seven hundred people. "I never had to worry about money when it came to moviemaking," said Shin, who made seven movies under Kim's patronage. Better still, Kim Jong Il didn't meddle or give notes, as Hollywood producers are wont to do. And Shin always had final cut. "Kim Jong Il was very supportive," Shin added. "But he never visited the set."

The two men often watched films together. "He just loves movies," Shin went on. "He likes all kinds of movies. But his favorites are adventure movies, like Indiana Jones." He has a fondness for Elizabeth Taylor, too.

"Pulgasari," on the other hand, is a period piece about a monster who suggests Godzilla crossbred with a longhorn steer. The monster possesses a kind heart and an insatiable appetite for anything made of iron. As he eats, he grows, and as he gets taller his bovine grunting becomes deeper. Pulgasari befriends a band of farmers suffering under the rule of a cruel king. The farmers keep Pulgasari fat and happy by feeding him their tools and kitchenware, and he repays them by joining them in battles that end with his devouring the metallic spoils of war.

The lead role is performed by Kenpachiro Satsuma, a Japanese actor who played Godzilla many times and whom Shin arranged to have brought over to North Korea specially for the project. Despite the unlimited budget, the special effects, Shin concedes, are primitive. If there is a political message in "Pulgasari," Shin says, it is a subtle, if ironic, call for pacifism: in the face of a cannon-eating beast, he says, "there are limits to what weapons can do."

He never found out how the film was received by the North Korean public or by his patron. Shin and Choi Un Hui managed to escape from their minders in 1986, while travelling to Vienna. He found his way to Hollywood, where he took the name Simon Sheen and, in subsequent years, made, among other films, the "Three Ninjas" trilogy, before moving back to his homeland.

He did, however, find out that after his escape his name was deleted from the credits of "Pulgasari" and another director's name put in its place, a clear sign that he would never eat lunch in Pyongyang again. Shin responded in the traditional Hollywood manner by writing the screenplay for "The Adventures of Galgameth," a "Pulgasari" remake.

—*Michael Shapiro*

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

MR. BROOKLYN

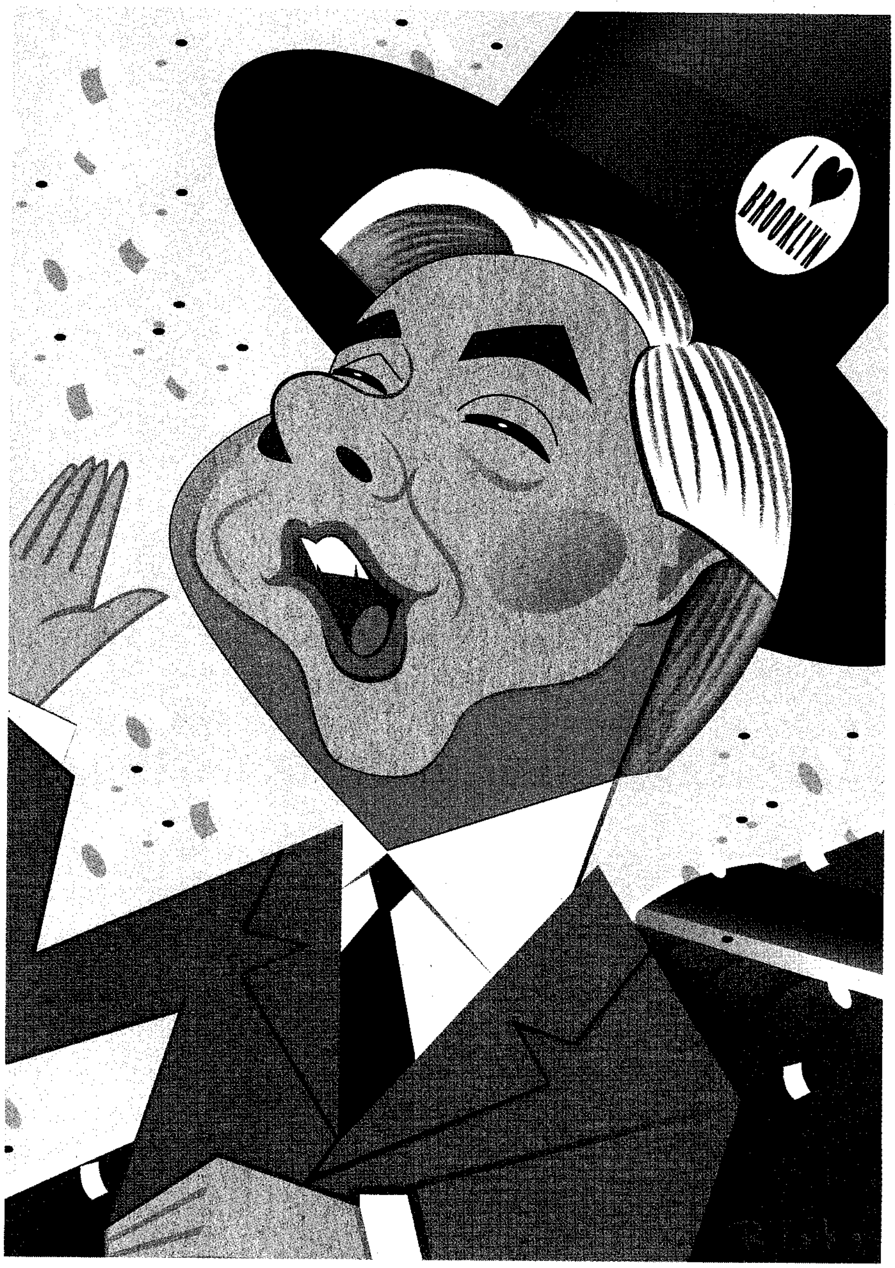
Marty Markowitz—the man, the plan, the arena.

BY REBECCA MEAD

Brooklyn's Borough Hall, a Greek Revival building with an Ionic colonnade clad in fine Tuckahoe marble and a roof topped, incongruously, with a Victorian cupola, is a monument to diminished expectations. The first plans for a City Hall—Brooklyn still being independent, at the time—were drawn up in 1802, and the imagined building was intended to rival the grander City Hall rising at that moment in downtown Manhattan. The boldness of that gesture was somewhat undermined by the fact that construction didn't begin for another thirty-four years, and the building was not completed until 1848. When, fifty years later, Brooklyn merged into New York City, the building was downgraded from City Hall to Borough Hall; and this decline in importance has grown more pronounced in the subsequent hundred-odd years—right up to the present, when the building's highest profile is, arguably, attained by the occasional appearance of its imposing courtroom in the television series "Law & Order."

The Borough President's office, in the southeast corner of the building, has recently undergone its own transformation. In the time of Howard Golden, who was Borough President from 1978 to 2002, the desk was positioned at the far end of the room, so that visitors were obliged to make a processional approach to the seat of influence. Under occupation by the incumbent, Marty Markowitz, the office looks less like a sober place of government than like Santa's workshop. On every surface—shelves, tables, window ledges, and cluttering the desk—there are Teddy bears and toy trucks, balls and bats, dolls dressed in the regalia of the Caribbean parade that takes place on Eastern Parkway every Labor Day. The room has been painted a vivid teal; and at the many windows hang curtains of satiny teal fabric, printed with the seal of the borough of Brooklyn. There are enough logo-bearing baseball caps to outfit both major leagues, including a vintage Brooklyn Dodgers cap. Above one doorway hangs a plastic basketball hoop, and a store-window mannequin in a corner wears a basketball jersey bearing the numeral 1 and a name: the Brooklyn Nets. These last are testament to Markowitz's enthusiastic embrace of the developer Bruce Ratner's plan to build a $2.5-billion arena and housing-and-commercial-development complex, known as Atlantic Yards, in downtown Brooklyn, and to move the New Jersey Nets, which Ratner bought last year, to Brooklyn. Markowitz's support of the Ratner project has been his most visible act as Borough President; depending on your political outlook, the plan is either a thrilling instance of Brooklyn's economic and cultural resurgence or a shocking capitulation to the interests of Ratner's multibillion-dollar development company, Forest City Ratner.

Markowitz was elected to the office of Borough President in 2001, after spending twenty-three years as a state senator representing first Flatbush and then Crown Heights and Midwood. (He is



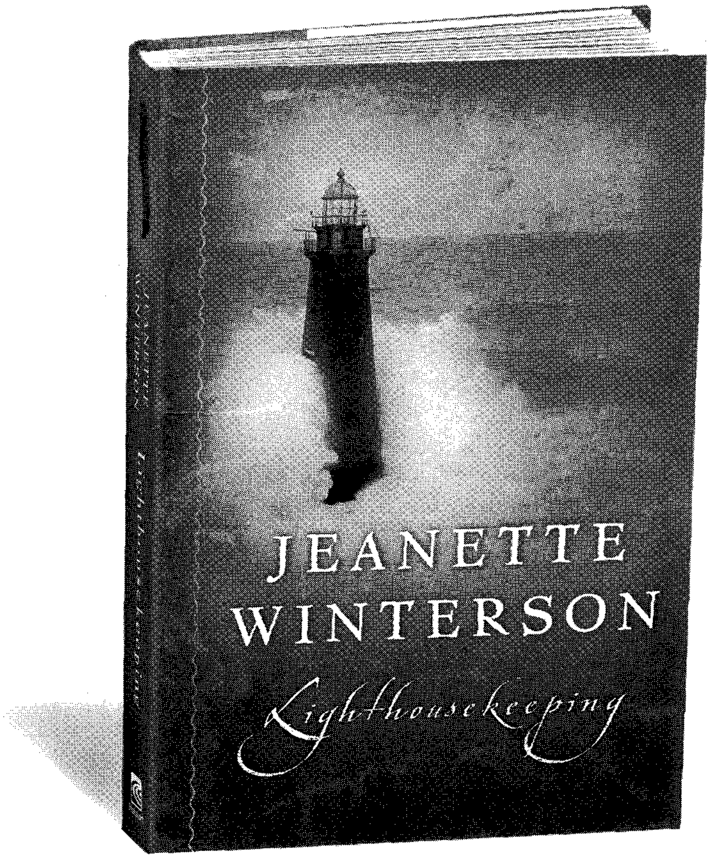
Markowitz, the Borough President, is Brooklyn's most indefatigable promoter.

up for reëlection later this year but seems unlikely to face serious competition.) In the past three years, he has become Brooklyn's most indefatigable promoter. One of Markowitz's earliest stunts was the installation of signs at entry points to the borough saying "How Sweet It Is!" and "Believe the Hype!" and, on the Gowanus Expressway, approaching the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, another sign, reading "Leaving Brooklyn—Fuhgeddaboudit!" (A subsequent attempt to install signs on the Manhattan-bound side of the Williamsburg Bridge reading "Leaving Brooklyn—Oy Vey!" was rejected by the city's Department of Transportation as distracting and uninformative.) Markowitz has also attracted attention less by design than by blunder. After his election, he announced his intention to take down some of the portraits of "old white guys"—former mayors and such—that hung in Borough Hall and replace them with portraits of blacks or women. One of the old white guys was George Washington, and Markowitz's gesture was taken by some to be unpatriotic; others thought it was merely silly, particularly since he had not felt obliged to surrender his own Caucasian electoral ambitions to Jeannette Gadson, the black, female runner-up in the primary for Borough President.

Markowitz has made an art of trading in a familiar nostalgia for better times as a means of promoting the future of what he usually refers to as "the city of Brooklyn." Ken Fisher, a former City Council member who was another of Markowitz's opponents, says, "Marty can make people nostalgic for the Dodgers who weren't even born when they left Brooklyn." Since his election, Markowitz has attained a degree of omnipresence in the seventy-two-and-a-half-square-mile borough: if there's a parade, he'll be marching in it; if there's a street fair, he'll be eating at it. If there are Brooklynites to be honored—such as Cake Man Raven, a Fort Greene confectioner who replicated Borough Hall in sponge cake and frosting for Markowitz's inauguration—Markowitz will be there, issuing a proclamation or a citation printed with gilded, archaic lettering. Markowitz, who is sixty and short and portly, can barely make a public appearance without cracking mournful jokes about his personal failings: his weakness in the face of Brooklyn's multiplicity of ethnic restaurants and his inability to con-

ROBERT RISKO

My mother called me Silver.
I was born part precious metal, part pirate.



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trol his weight; his remaining single until the age of fifty-four, when he married Jamie Snow, a graphic designer about a dozen years his junior, whom he met at a beach while handing out leaflets for a concert series (the Markowitzes have no children); his incapacity, on a salary of a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars a year, to enter the Brooklyn real-estate marketplace. ("Blessed are they who bought early," he told participants at one street fair in Park Slope.) It is possible that he makes an occasional public appearance without mentioning Junior's cheesecake, but very infrequently; and his references to a desire for Brooklyn's secession are legion, if unsupported by any policy papers or economic analyses.

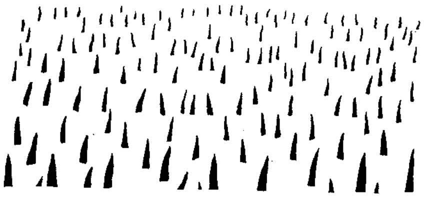
"An elected official, in my opinion, has to serve in several different capacities," Markowitz said one morning not long ago in his office, sitting in a leather armchair in the half-cross-legged position he favors, with one foot balanced high on his opposite thigh. "Policy is very important; issues are very important, of course. But there is a spirit—making people feel good about themselves and where they live." Markowitz's commitment to keeping his constituents amused was illustrated by his launching of an annual "Lighten Up, Brooklyn" weight-loss campaign, for which he stripped to his shorts at Borough Hall for a weigh-in. He has since more than regained the eleven pounds he lost, perhaps in part because that fervent health-care initiative was followed, in subsequent months, by an official "How Sweet It Is! Sweet Potato Pie Scholarship Contest," a bake-off among forty-nine groups.

Markowitz's office, like that of New York's other borough presidents, combines a grand governmental title with a slight portfolio and a very modest budget. (This year, Markowitz has an operating budget of five million dollars; the city's over-all budget was fifty-one billion dollars.) The five borough presidents were not always the neutered beasts that they are now: for decades after Brooklyn became part of New York City, the occupants of Borough Hall, at 209 Joralemon Street, retained considerable political clout. They had the power of patronage; and, along with the presidents of the other boroughs, they sat on the eight-member Board of Estimate, which exercised oversight of city budgets, land use, and zoning. But in 1989 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Board of Estimate was unconstitutional; the board was abolished after a new city charter was adopted. The *Times*, in endorsing Markowitz against his two primary contestants in August, 2001, acknowledged the comparative impotence of the office that he was seeking. Indeed, that was what made Markowitz, whom the paper described as "an ebullient public servant who could provide a refreshing boosterism for the sometimes beleaguered borough," the right man for the job.

Markowitz's ebullience is such that, among other city officials, he tends to be treated less as a political peer than as a cheery mascot for his borough. In mid-December, Markowitz shared a platform with Mayor Bloomberg at an event announcing an investment in the neglected Restoration Plaza, on Fulton Street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, and the Mayor introduced him with an air of amused condescension.

"When they write the book on city government and say, 'What does a borough president look like?' I'm going to show you Marty Markowitz," Bloomberg said. Markowitz bounded to the podium to announce the addition of five hundred thousand dollars for Restoration Plaza from his own office's capital budget to the Mayor's pledge of seven hundred thousand. "Only in Brooklyn, and only in New York, can two Jewish boys make this Christmas present to you tonight," Markowitz bellowed, while Bloomberg stood to the side wearing a well-worn grimace, as if he were an audience member at a borscht-belt comedy show who had been dragged onstage and obliged to endure a few humiliating moments of audience participation.

While the borough is still beleaguered in many ways—more than twenty per cent of its two and a half million residents live below the poverty line—Brooklyn has also begun to serve as an overspill for Manhattan wealth, with development proposed for many formerly neglected stretches of territory, from the old Brooklyn Navy Yard, which now houses movie studios, to the industrial waterfront between Williamsburg and Greenpoint, where the city would like to see luxury apartment towers rise, to the piers below the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway just south of the Brooklyn Bridge, where new parkland has been proposed. Markowitz revels in a borough-based chauvinism: he claims not to see the point of leaving Brooklyn and has no interest in travel, although his wife insists on a cruise to the Caribbean once a year. "I never get off the ship," he says. "I appoint myself Homeland Security chief, and watch to make sure all the food comes out on time." But his self-appointment as Brooklyn's chief nostalgist deflects attention from the surprising fact that, if the Atlantic Yards development gets built, he will have wielded far more influence over the shaping of Brooklyn's future than anyone expected of him.



Markowitz was one of those Brooklyn children who rarely went to Manhattan: he grew up in Crown Heights, where his father worked as a waiter in a kosher delicatessen; his main entertainment was hanging out on the streets with other kids. His father died when he was nine, and several years later Markowitz's widowed mother moved to public housing in Sheepshead Bay with Marty and his two younger sisters. He was educated in the borough, too, taking night classes for nine years at Brooklyn College. Markowitz got his start in politics by organizing tenants' and senior citizens' groups in Flatbush in the early seventies. He was elected to the State Senate in 1978, and held on to his seat through two redistricting processes, during which his constituency went from being fifty-five per cent white to ninety-two per cent black and Latino. He first ran for Borough President in 1985, against the incumbent, Howard Golden, who, he contended, was more beholden to Democratic Party powers than to Brooklyn at large. ("How long will the future of our neighborhoods be sliced up like a Junior's cheesecake?" Markowitz said on the stump.) That bid for office resulted in Markowitz's being charged with failing to disclose a campaign contribution from a local businessman: he pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor, paid a nearly eight-thousand-dollar fine, and performed seventy-five hours of community service.

Markowitz has always used his office in unusual ways: as a state senator, he organized free summer concerts featuring mostly crowd-pleasing, B-list bands and performers, at which he would appear as the m.c., dressed in a white tuxedo. (When in 1991 riots broke out in Crown Heights, part of Markowitz's district, Markowitz was hosting B. B. King at a concert a few blocks away.) In Albany, he was better known for bringing bagels, dyed green for St. Patrick's Day, to the Senate chamber than for any legislative innovations. In some respects, though, Markowitz's actions as Borough President have revealed the reflexes of a parochial politician. To the New York City Panel for Education Policy, formerly the Board of Education, Markowitz named Donald Weber, a longtime schools superintendent, a decision that drew controversy on two counts: the position on the board, which had been newly restructured, was intended for a representative of Brooklyn parents, rather than for an education bureaucrat; and Weber's school district had been investigated in the late eighties and mid-nineties by the Brooklyn D.A.'s office for cronyism. (Weber later resigned anyway, citing the panel's impotence.) Another embarrassment occurred when it emerged that Dolly Williams, a co-founder of a construction company in Brooklyn, and Markowitz's appointee to the New York City Planning Commission, had also invested a million dollars in Bruce Ratner's Nets.

Markowitz's public image of well-meaning haplessness is so refined that what might be seen as a calculated step by another politician is, in his case, taken to be misguided folly. Markowitz shrugs off some of his errors of judgment, such as backing Brooklyn's candidate for leader of the City Council, Angel Rodriguez, who was defeated by Gifford Miller and some months later found guilty of bribery and extortion charges. "If anyone knew he was a crook, they wouldn't have supported him," Markowitz says.

When it comes to Democratic Party influence, Markowitz could not have ascended to the borough presidency at a worse time. "The peak of Brooklyn's power was in the mid-nineteen-seventies," says Markowitz's electoral rival, Ken Fisher, whose father, Harold Fisher, was the chairman of the M.T.A. in the seventies. "Mayor Beame was from Brooklyn. Governor Carey was from Brooklyn. Tom Cuite, the head of the City Council, was from Brooklyn." So, in Albany, were Mel Miller, Stanley Steingut, and Stanley Fink, all onetime speakers of the State Assembly; and all looked out for their home borough. The once-famed Brooklyn Democratic machine may be in abeyance; Markowitz has responded by turning his office into a public-relations machine instead.

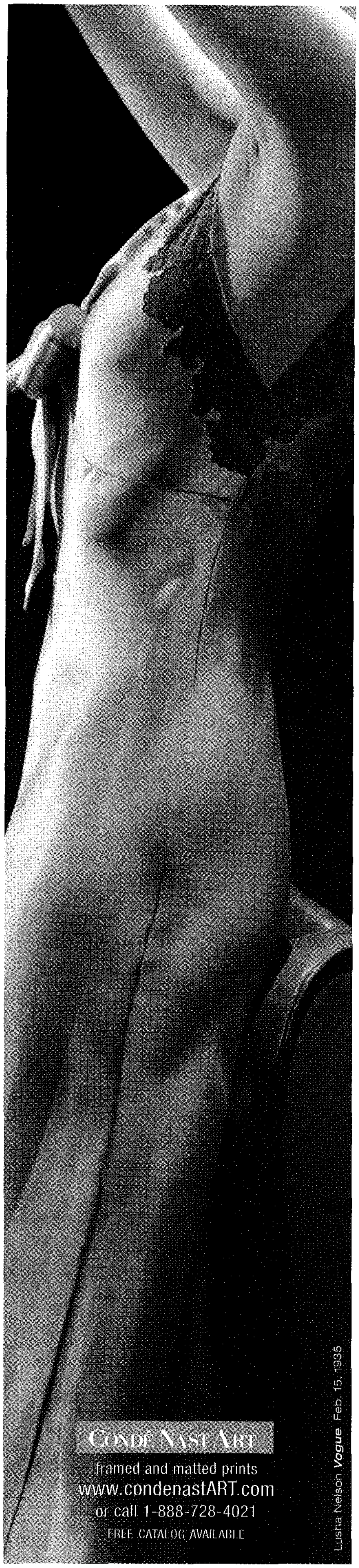
"Hi! I'm the bluebird of death."

• •

On a bitterly cold Tuesday in December, Markowitz's schedule took him to Kings Highway, where he attended a party hosted by an organization called the Federation of Employment and Guidance Services, which provides support to recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Sixty partygoers crowded into a conference room. Markowitz showed up just fifteen minutes behind schedule. Many in the audience, mostly elderly, appeared not to know who he was. He told the crowd that it was important to learn English and to stay young; and that he loved Georgian food, because it had a little spice; and that Brooklyn has always welcomed immigrants. He hoped that tourists would discover the variety and ethnic wealth that the borough had to offer. "Only in Brooklyn can you go from China to Russia in fifteen minutes," he said, his enthusiasm overruling any memory of geography class, where he might have been taught that those two countries share a border for more than twenty-two hundred miles.

Markowitz's car was waiting for him on Kings Highway, and he leaped in. (Having a driver is one of the perks of the job, and Markowitz uses his a lot; last year, one of his three drivers earned thirty-four thousand dollars in overtime pay, on a base salary of forty thousand dollars, while another driver was on a lengthy medical leave.) He met next with a group from Boerum Hill, the residential district of brownstones and town houses near downtown Brooklyn. The residents were campaigning for street plantings at the site of a recently restored subway kiosk dating from 1908, at the corner of Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues. Markowitz's driver approached the intersection from Fourth Avenue, heading down what was formerly an industrial strip that was recently rezoned to permit the construction of apartment buildings.

The gilded cupola of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank was gleaming in the late-afternoon sun. The tower, built two years before the Empire State Building, is Brooklyn's most magnificent skyscraper from New York's golden age of construction and, at the time it was erected, the tallest four-sided clock tower in the na-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tion. Just south of the tower lies the proposed site of Atlantic Yards. The project, designed by Frank Gehry, is slated to include several towers, the tallest of which, at six hundred and twenty feet, will loom more than a hundred feet above the golden cupola. Markowitz claims to be confident that the older building will not be overshadowed—"From what I understand, there are ways in architecture to design a building in a way that enhances the view of the Williamsburgh building," he says. (Forest City Ratner has provided few details of what the larger housing development will look like, though an architect's model of the arena displays Gehry's signature wavy metallic walls and a roof garden overlooking Flatbush Avenue.)

In the car, Markowitz's cell phone rang, and the voice of a female assistant announced that "Bruce" was on the line.

"Yes, sir, how are you doing, Bruce?" Markowitz said, picking up the handset and falling silent as he listened. Bruce Ratner, it appeared from Markowitz's responses, had some urgent questions about the way discussions concerning waterfront development in Williamsburg and Greenpoint might affect his own project. Markowitz, whenever he could get a word in, tried to be both conciliatory and upbeat. "I understand," he said; and then, "I wish I knew, but I don't know"; and "It's hard for me"; and "That's absolutely right." Finally, he told Ratner to call someone in his office—better yet, he would have that someone call Ratner.

Across the street, a small huddle of Boerum Hill residents handed Markowitz a sheaf of plans showing an arrangement of planters and greenery they would like to see in front of the restored subway kiosk. Perhaps, a resident suggested, Forest City Ratner might be persuaded to contribute the funds.

"Does Ratner want to prove he cares?" someone asked.

"I haven't asked him," Markowitz replied testily. Then he went to look at the other side of the kiosk, which, another member of the group was telling him, would be a perfect place for a Christmas tree next year.

Last year, Markowitz went to a basketball game for the first time in his life, at the Meadowlands, with Ratner. "He bought his own ticket, as he is required to do," Ratner says. "He might even have nodded off now and then. But he does call me when the Nets win. He is very encouraging." When he was campaigning for the borough presidency, Markowitz said that he wanted to bring an N.B.A. team to Brooklyn, and the idea was taken about as seriously as his appeals for Brooklyn's secession. But in the fall of 2002, when it became clear that the New Jersey Nets were likely to come on the market, Markowitz picked up the phone. He had done that before: during his first few weeks in office, he called Peter O'Malley, the son of Walter O'Malley, who had moved the Dodgers to California in the nineteen-fifties. "I heard that the team was up for sale, and I said, 'Mr. O'Malley, it would be great for your family name and everything if you would consider moving the L.A. Dodgers back to Brooklyn,' " Markowitz says. "I must tell you, that conversation was very brief."

Markowitz said of his Nets-related scheming, "I thought to myself, Who can I call who has a dedication to Brooklyn, and that has got the economic ability, because, let's face it, someone who builds two-family homes is not going to be in a position to buy a team and to build an arena." He considered Donald Trump, but feared that Trump might move the team closer to Atlantic City and his casino investments. Markowitz did, however, call Bruce Ratner, whose company, over the past two decades, has built the massive Metro Tech development—more than two million square feet of office space—not far from the proposed site of the arena. "Bruce had no interest, absolutely no interest," Markowitz said. "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to look at this fella and know that he's not a jock." (Ratner, who is sixty, looks more like the Consumer Affairs Commissioner he was during the Koch administration.) "But I was very persistent with him, and didn't take no for an answer."

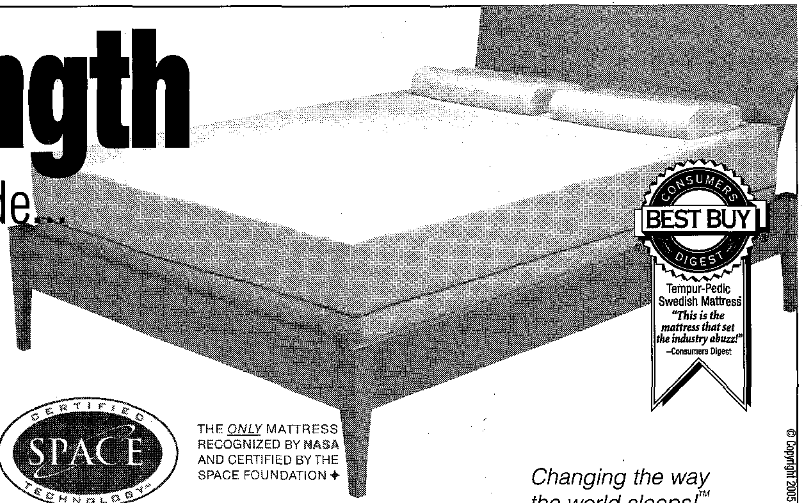
"He called every two to three weeks," Ratner says. "I would make up little white lies, and I would wait a day or two to call him back. I am sure I said to my assistant, 'Oh, my God, it's Marty.' " Eventually, Ratner was convinced of the wisdom of the notion, but not before augmenting the Borough President's ambitions with his own calculations—"the recognition that there is an opportunity to do what my business is, which is real estate and large-scale economic development."

Thus the arena imagined by Markowitz became only part of a much larger development, which will stretch six blocks along the border of Prospect Heights. Ratner says that he had looked at the site years ago, but dismissed the idea as unworkable. In the past five to seven years, however, the neighborhood's profile changed, as the handsome brownstones attracted new residents. "A lot of it stems from the safety, and security, and resurgence of Brooklyn," Ratner said.

Markowitz believes that the Atlantic Yards development will provide jobs for thousands of Brooklyn residents, particularly those for whom the much discussed rebirth of the borough has meant little more than being priced out of apartments they once could afford. But the proposal has strong opponents, too, including Letitia James, the council member whose district encompasses Prospect Heights, and who, while commending Markowitz for his general efforts on behalf of the borough—"If I had a party, the first person I would invite is Marty," she says—is skeptical that Ratner's project is in the borough's best interests. "This arena is really for the executives who are employed at Metro Tech, and it is across the street from the largest transportation hub for Long Island in the borough," she says, referring to the L.I.R.R. station at Atlantic Avenue. "It has nothing to do with Brooklynites."

Neighborhood opposition to the project has ranged from anger at the suggestion that the state may invoke powers of eminent domain to the argument that a privately owned real-estate development is not the best use of the land, a large chunk of which is owned by the M.T.A., and will alter the character of the neighborhood. But the right of the gentrifying class to preserve its property values in blocks close to the arena is not one around which much mass support can be rallied in Brooklyn; and, meanwhile, Forest City Ratner has demonstrated a keen understanding of community politics in lining up support among representatives of the neighborhood's less affluent populations. While fifty per cent of the housing will be for the luxury market, Ratner says, the rest will be set aside for residents whose incomes are between eighteen thousand and a hundred thousand dollars a year. (There have been similar promises that minority-owned and women-owned businesses will get priority when it comes to applying for construction contracts.) "I never want to see a time in Brooklyn when there are multimillionaires and there are those who live in public housing, and nothing in between," Markowitz says. He does not mention that the wealthiest new property owner in the neighborhood will be Bruce Ratner.

One Saturday morning not long ago, Markowitz attended a coffee-and-dog-biscuits gathering, held by a group called FIDO, which stands for Fellowship for the Interests of Dogs and their Owners and meets once a month in Prospect Park. Later that day, he was due at the Christian Cultural Center, a megachurch in southern Brooklyn, where the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houses are faced with plain brick or vinyl siding rather than with brownstone. After dropping in at a few community-group meetings on the way, he'd be rounding out his evening with dinner in Bay Ridge, courtesy of the Borough President of Staten Island, James Molinaro, to celebrate a victory over the Staten Island Yankees by the Brooklyn Cyclones, the immensely popular Mets farm team for which a stadium opened at Coney Island in 2001, and which regularly sells out its sixty-five hundred seats.

I joined Markowitz and his driver during a break between these appearances. We started out on Fulton Street, which, like so many stretches in Brooklyn, offers a patchwork of commercial activity: a pizzeria; a Chinese take-out; a row of Afrocentric stores and boutiques that have grown up over the past decade; and signs of more recent arrivals, such as a wine store and a bistro with windows that open to the street in summer.

Next, we drove a couple of blocks over to Forest City Ratner's newest development, the Atlantic Terminal shopping mall, which is adjacent to the proposed site of Atlantic Yards. The mall is an unlovely green-and-brown hulk bordering streets of brownstones, the shape of whose sloped roofs its own much taller roof grotesquely mimics. It houses gleaming national franchises like Target, Starbucks, and Chuck E. Cheese. Shoppers scurried by.

The car looped west and turned up Pacific Street, into the footprint of the proposed arena. "Just take a look at what's coming down," Markowitz said. "I want you to look at this and tell me in any manner, shape, or form that this has historical significance." On the block where we were, there were a few warehouses and row houses looking shabby and forlorn, as if they had resigned themselves to their fate. "You can see this is gorgeous—just a beautiful, beautiful sight," Markowitz said, with undisguised sarcasm.

The car proceeded up Pacific Street, alongside the rail yards, and Markowitz said, "When you take a look and you close your eyes you can envision beautiful housing, and retail, and some commercial space, and an arena, and activity, and people here, and people excited about living here. . . . " He trailed off into urban reverie. Developers like Bruce Ratner, he said, were necessary to bridge the housing gap, given that the government wasn't going to do it. "The developers, unlike me, are not in the business of being public servants or social workers or do-gooders," he said. "I hate to say it, but they are businesspeople, and they should be businesspeople."

We drove up to Prospect Park, and continued into Crown Heights, where Markowitz grew up. "Good Shabbos!" he called out the car window to a passing Hasidic family, and muttered, "I'm not supposed to be in the car. But they'll forgive me, they know I'm not religious." Soon we were heading up Empire Boulevard, and at the intersection with Rogers Avenue Markowitz asked his driver to stop. He pointed to a small restaurant, Toomey's Diner, on the corner of the block.

"It's hard to believe that there used to be lines to get into this place," he said, and he gestured in the other direction, toward a series of apartment towers a block or two away. "This place is also hard to envision," he said. "This was our beloved Ebbets Field," where the Dodgers once played, and where the Ebbets Field Apartments now stand. His father, he said, used to take him down Empire Boulevard to see games, and as a boy he and his friends would sneak into the grandstands.

"This had more seats, and played more games, than our proposed indoor arena," he said. "It is in the middle of an urban area, and it worked. And there was less public transportation here than there is at Atlantic and Flatbush." I asked Markowitz if the Ebbets Field Apartments—characterless postwar tower blocks that rose bleak against the cold sky—were public housing, and he explained that they had been built under the Mitchell-Lama program, launched in 1955, and named for a state senator, MacNeill Mitchell, and an assemblyman, Alfred Lama. Mitchell-Lama was the state's effort to create housing specifically for low- and middle-income residents, and more than a hundred and five thousand apartments were built before construction under the program ended in the late nineteen-seventies. A nostalgia for that aspect of Brooklyn's past was not, though, one in which Marty Markowitz, for all his egg-cream soliloquizing, could afford to indulge, and the car drove on. ♦

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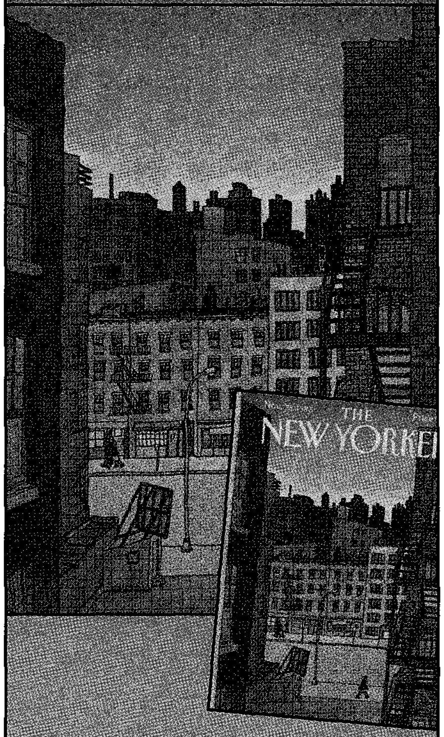

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MY LIVING WILL

BY PAUL RUDNICK

1. If I should remain in a persistent vegetative state for more than fifteen years, I would like someone to turn off the TV.

2. If I remain motionless for an extended period and utter only guttural, meaningless sounds, I would like a Guggenheim.

3. If I am unable to recognize or interact with friends or family members, I still expect gifts.

4. If I am unable to feed, clean, or dress myself, I would like to be referred to as “Mr. Trump.”

5. Do not resuscitate me before noon.

6. If I do not respond to pinches, pinpricks, rubber mallets, or other medical stimuli, please stop laughing.

7. If I no longer respond to loved ones’ attempts at communication, ask them about our last car trip.

8. Once I am allowed to die a painless and peaceful death, I would like my organs donated to whoever can catch them.

9. If my death is particularly dramatic, I would like to be played by Hilary Swank, for a slam dunk.

10. If there is any family dispute over my medical condition, it must be settled with a dreidel.

11. Even if I remain in a persistent vegetative state for more than fifteen years, that still doesn’t mean bangs.

12. If my doctor pronounces me brain-dead, I would like to see the new Ashton Kutcher movie.

13. If I remain unconscious during a painful, lingering illness, I would like the following life lessons to be published in a book entitled “Tuesdays with Paul”:

i. Treasure every moment.
ii. Love everyone.
iii. If you bought this in hardcover, you’re an idiot.

14. I do not wish to be kept alive by any machine that has a “Popcorn” setting.

15. I would like to die at home, surrounded by my attorneys.

16. If my loved ones insist that the cost of my medical care has become an impossible burden, show them a Polaroid of their “beach shack.”

17. In lieu of flowers or donations, I would prefer rioting.

18. I would like my entire estate to become the property of my cat, Fluffy, who said, “He wouldn’t want to live like this, with that zit.”

19. Assume that, even in a coma, I can still hear discussions about my apartment.

20. If there is any talk of canonizing me, please remember that I have often held the elevator for people who were still getting their mail, that I have twice offered a cab to a woman in a fur coat even though I was totally there first, and that I always waited to make derogatory comments until after the couple with the double stroller was a block away.

21. In the event of an open coffin, I would like smoky evening eyes.

22. At my memorial service, I would like my clergyman to begin his eulogy with the words “I suppose, in a way, we all killed him.” ♦

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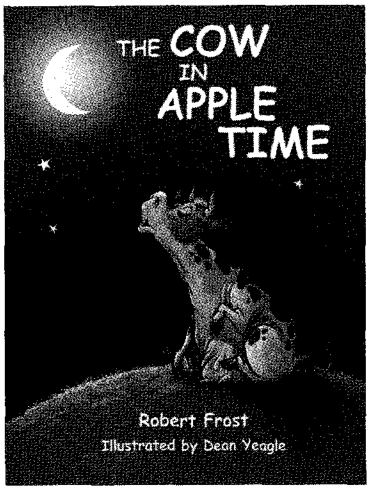

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ANNALS OF HISTORY

INVADERS

Destroying Baghdad.

BY IAN FRAZIER

Recently, I've been buttonholing everybody I know and telling them about Hulagu. What happened was, a couple of years ago Osama bin Laden said (in one of his intermittent recorded messages to the world) that during the previous Gulf War Colin Powell and Dick Cheney had destroyed Baghdad worse than Hulagu of the Mongols. Bin Laden provided no further identification of Hulagu, probably assuming that none was needed. Of course, almost no one in America had any idea what he was talking about, so news stories helpfully added that Hulagu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, was a Mongol general who sacked Baghdad in the year 1258. Beyond that footnote, the press as a whole shrugged at bin Laden's out-of-left-field comparison and moved on.

At the time, I was doing research for a book about a subject in which the Mongols came up occasionally. Anyone who does research knows you have to stay focussed on your topic and not go down every interesting avenue you pass, or you will end up wandering aimlessly in attention-deficit limbo. I tried to keep on track, but whenever I spotted a reference to Hulagu, or descriptions of Mongol conquests in central Asia (Genghis Khan's armies were said to have killed 1.6 million people in the city of Herat in northwestern Afghanistan in 1222; that's *1.6 million*, dispatched with arrows, clubs, and swords), the pointing finger of bin Laden kept distracting me. I wondered how a world figure like Hulagu could be so well known, apparently, in the far reaches of Asia, and the opposite of that here. I also wondered, in terms of simple fact, if it could be accurate to say that Cheney and Powell were worse than he. The cities in which Mongol history took place were often the same ones I'd seen in the newspaper that morning—Kabul, Qum, Kandahar, Mosul, Karbala, Tikrit. Reading about the Iraq war seemed to segue unavoidably into reading about the Mongols. Also, I have the possibly naïve belief that you should try to understand your enemy's mind. Finally I quit resisting and went with the Mongol flow.

For the cities and cultivated places in the Mongols' path, they were a natural disaster on the order of an asteroid collision. Like the Huns and the Scythians before them, they came from the steppe grasslands of central Asia, which produced their great resource of horses and draft animals. After Genghis Khan united a number of Mongol tribes into a single horde under his command in the early thirteenth century, they descended on cities in China, India, Afghanistan, Persia, Turkestan, and Russia. Between 1211 and 1223, they wasted dozens of cities and wiped out more than 18.4 million people in China and environs alone. (These and other large numbers of victims attributed to the Mongols may have been inspired more by terror than by historical fact.) By the time of Genghis Khan's death, in 1227, the Mongol empire extended from the Volga River to the Pacific Ocean.

The Mongols had so many oxen and cattle that they were able to carry all kinds of stuff with them—entire houses, and even temples—on giant carts. Observers said the number of Mongol horses was beyond counting, every warrior possessing many remounts. Mongols spent so much time on horseback that they grew up bowlegged. If a Mongol had to move any distance farther than a hundred paces, he jumped on a horse and rode. A contemporary Russian annal describes the Mongol army approaching the walls of Kiev: "The rattling of their innumerable carts, the bellowing of camels and cattle, the neighing of horses, and the wild battle-cry, were so overwhelming as to render inaudible the conversation of

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the people inside the city." Of necessity, the Mongols did most of their conquering and plundering during the warmer seasons, when there was sufficient grass for their herds.

Fuelled by grass, the Mongol empire could be described as solar-powered; it was an empire of the land. Later empires, such as the British, moved by ship and were wind-powered, empires of the sea. The American empire, if it is an empire, runs on oil and is an empire of the air. On the world's largest landmass, Iraq is a main crossroads; most aspirants to empire eventually pass through there.

In battle, a historian wrote, "the Mongols made the fullest use of the terror inspired by their physique, their ugliness, and their stench." Mongols were narrow-waisted and small-footed, with big heads. They shaved their hair short on the backs and tops of their heads and left it long at the sides. Custom forbade them from ever washing their clothes. Also contributing to their smell might have been their diet, which at certain times of the year was mainly mare's milk. On marches when there wasn't time to milk, Mongol riders would open a vein in their horses' necks and drink the blood, either straight or from a pouch. Mongols were especially fond of fermented mare's milk, called *kumis*. Many Mongol nobles died young from drunkenness. After victories, Mongols sometimes celebrated by drinking *kumis* while sitting on benches made of planks tied to the backs of their prisoners.

Mongols also ate meat tenderized by being sat on beneath their saddles on long journeys; marmot steeped in sour milk; curds dried in the sun; roots, dogs, rats—almost anything, according to several observers. Marco Polo, who travelled among them in the years 1275-92, wrote that they ate hamsters, which were plentiful on the steppes. A Franciscan friar who in 1245 went to seek out the Great Khan in the hope of persuading him to become a Christian reported that, during a siege of a Chinese city, a Mongol army ran out of food and ate one of every ten of its own soldiers. Mediterranean people who knew the Mongols only by reputation believed they were creatures with dogs' heads who lived on human flesh.

Other Mongol facts: On their treeless steppes, they tended to get hit by lightning a lot. Thunder terrified them. They wore armor made of scales of iron sewn to garments of thick hide, and iron helmets that sometimes came to a point on top. Their swords were short and sometimes curved. The notches in their arrows were too narrow to fit the wider bowstrings of the Western people they fought, so that the arrows could not be picked up and shot back at them. Mongol bows, made of layers of horn and sinew on a wooden frame, took two men to string. Warriors carried them strung, in holsterlike cases at their belts. Mongols had no words for "right" and "left," but called them "west" and "east," respectively. When anyone begged from them, they replied, "Go, with God's curse, for if he loved you as he loves me, he would have provided for you."

Later commentators, trying to think of something positive to say about the Mongols, always mention that they were the first people to unite East and West, and to bring Europe and China real news of each other. The globally eye-opening books of Marco Polo would not have been possible without the safe passage provided for him by Mongol power. Mongols were curious about religions, and tolerant toward them. Mongol armies sometimes did not destroy churches, mosques, and monasteries. Eventually, many of the Mongol hordes combined their own shamanist beliefs with the Islam or Buddhism prevailing in the lands they overran. Unlike previous steppe barbarians, the Mongols had a strong body of laws, the *yasaq*, based on the decrees of Genghis Khan, and in many cases it remained in place for centuries in their conquered territories. In general, the Mongols were well organized. At their empire's height, they had a fast and efficient postal service, of much greater extent than any the world had seen.

By the fifteenth century, better defenses and the increased sophistication of firearms began to give civilized places an advantage over Mongol horsemen in warfare. The Mongols were becoming less dangerous, too, as they took up the domesticated customs of people they had ruled. Accompanying the Mongol empire's eventual quiet retreat back into the steppes was the conversion of the majority of the Mongols to Tibetan Buddhism. Sonam Gyatso, who became the Dalai Lama in 1543, set out on a missionary journey to Mongolia in 1577, performed many miracles on the way, and was greeted by the Mongols with rejoicing. In less than a generation, many Mongols had become Lamaists, renouncing not only warfare but all other violence, including hunting and hawking. Today the Tibetan Buddhists believe that the saintly Sonam Gyatso is alive in his latest reincarnation, in the person of Tenzin Gyatso, the current Dalai Lama, recently seen smiling beatifically in ads for a computer brand.

TIGERS

What are we now but voices
who promise each other
a life neither one can deliver
not for lack of wanting
but wanting can't make it so.
We hang from a vine
at the cliff's edge.
There are tigers above
and below. Let us love
one another and let go.

—*Eliza Griswold*

During the time of Hulagu, the Mongols were still centuries from being peaceable. Hulagu—the name is also spelled Halagu, Hülegü, Hulégu, Khulagu, etc.—was the son of Genghis Khan's son Tolui. Hulagu was the third-youngest among four brothers, all of them famous: Mongke, who outmaneuvered rivals to become khan in 1251, and who died of dysentery; Kubilai, arguably the most powerful khan ever, who occupied Peking and founded a Chinese dynasty that lasted almost a hundred years; Hulagu, an il-khan, or subsidiary khan, whose domains were in Persia and the west; and Arigh-boke, who rebelled against Kubilai and held out for years until Kubilai defeated him.

Because the Mongols absorbed many peoples and tolerated different religions, they soon had Buddhists, Muslims, Taoists, and even Christians among them. Hulagu was educated by a Nestorian Christian priest. Sorkhakhtani, Hulagu's mother, was a Nestorian. (Nestorians held a less exalted view of the divinity of Christ, and were regarded by the Roman and Orthodox churches as heretics.) Hulagu's principal wife, Dokuz-khatun, also a Nestorian, often persuaded Hulagu to be lenient toward Christians in lands that he conquered. Dokuz-khatun was said to be descended from one of the wise men who visited the baby Jesus in the manger. Hulagu seems never to have become a Christian himself, but members of the faith in the Middle East saw him as their champion. Upon the death of this destroyer of multitudes, the head of the Jacobite Syriac Church said, "The wisdom of this man, and his greatness of soul, and his wonderful actions are incomparable. . . . Great sorrow came to all the Christians throughout the world."

So on the one hand you've got Hulagu, and on the other you've got Baghdad. Mongols destroyed cities; Islam built them. In the years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, in 632, his Arab followers spread their religion along the southern Mediterranean as far west as Spain and into central Asia as far east as Pakistan. Along the way, they founded new cities or enlarged old ones, and, of all the cities of early Islam, Baghdad became the wonder. The caliph—Islam's spiritual leader, comparable to the Pope—founded it in 762 and finished its construction in 766. His name was Jaffar al-Mansour, and he belonged to the Abbassid line of caliphs, who descended from the Prophet's paternal uncle, Abbas. The Abbassid caliphate lasted for five hundred years. Mansour chose the small village of Baghdad, on the Tigris, as the site for his future capital because of its possibilities for transportation and agriculture. He also liked its remoteness. He wanted to get away from the factional disputes that had come up in Islam's previous capital cities of Medina, Damascus, Kufa, and Basra. Islam suffered from violent factions, notably the Sunni-Shia schism, dating from soon after Muhammad's death. Mansour called his city Madinat as-Salaam, "the city of peace," from a verse referring to Paradise in the Koran. The name Baghdad, however, prevailed.

Within forty years, Baghdad had become the storied and romantic place it would forever be in popular imagination. Under enlightened, poetry-loving caliphs like Harun al-Rashid, Mansour's grandson, Baghdad attracted scholars from all the domains of Islam, in keeping with Muhammad's teaching that educated men are next to the angels and that "the scholar's ink is more sacred than the blood of martyrs." Mansour's prediction that his city would be a crossroads had come true, and wealth accumulated from caravan trade arriving from each of the four directions. Poets who pleased the caliph might have pearls poured upon them; concubines for his harem sold for tens of thousands of gold dirhams. A Chinese method for making paper from flax and hemp appeared in the Middle East at about the time of the city's founding, and the new technology produced books in quantities impossible before. Almost everybody in ninth-century Baghdad could read and write. While Europe still moiled in its Dark Ages, Baghdad was a city of booksellers, bathhouses, gardens, game parks, libraries. Harun al-Rashid was the first chess-playing caliph; Baghdadis also played checkers and backgammon. Translators took Greek works and rendered them into Arabic, in which they were preserved to be translated into European languages several centuries later.

The palaces of the caliphs were of marble, rare woods, jade, and alabaster, with fountains and interior gardens, and carpets and wall hangings by the thousand. Servants sprinkled guests with sprinklers of rosewater and powdered musk and ambergris. A poet wrote, "Live long, O Caliph, to thy heart's content / In scented shade of palace minarets." Arts and sciences flourished—literature, music, calligraphy, philosophy, mathematics, chemistry, history. Because of the need for accuracy in setting the religious calendar and orienting mosques to face Mecca, astronomy was especially important. From Baghdad's best years we get words like "zenith" and "nadir," as well as "algebra," "algorithm," "alcohol," "alembic," "alchemy." The food in Baghdad was great, too, apparently. The city's gardens grew a cornucopia of fruits, spices, pistachios, licorice root. Its cooks knew how to make highly complicated dishes, and sweets like halvah and baklava.

As happens with most golden eras, Baghdad's quickly ended. A century after Harun al-Rashid, the city's influence and glory had declined. Political changes made the caliph less powerful, limiting his temporal domain to Baghdad and nearest regions, though Sunni Muslims in other places still accepted his spiritual authority. The city remained a center of wealth and commerce, and an imposing sight architecturally. A Spanish pilgrim, Ibn Jubayr, who visited Baghdad in 1184, wrote, "The Tigris . . . runs between its eastern and its western parts . . . like a string of pearls between two breasts." He noted the beauty of the caliph's palace reflected in the water. Caliph Mustasim, the thirty-seventh in the Abbassid line, who became caliph in 1242, had confidence that his house would reign until Resurrection Day. Rumors of the approach of the Mongol army in 1257 did not worry him. During the reign of his father, the armies of the caliph had been among a very few opponents to defeat and turn back the Mongols.

From deep in Mongolia Hulagu set out in 1253, marching westward at the head of a large force that included siege-engine experts of several nationalities. His trebuchets could hurl huge rocks, and smaller stones covered in flaming naphtha, and his arbalesters could shoot bolts dipped in burning pitch a distance of twenty-five hundred paces. Hulagu's brother Mongke Khan told him to subdue the people he encountered as he continued all the way to Egypt, being kind to those who submitted and killing or enslaving the rest. The Mongols took eighteen months crossing Asia as far as Afghanistan. There and in

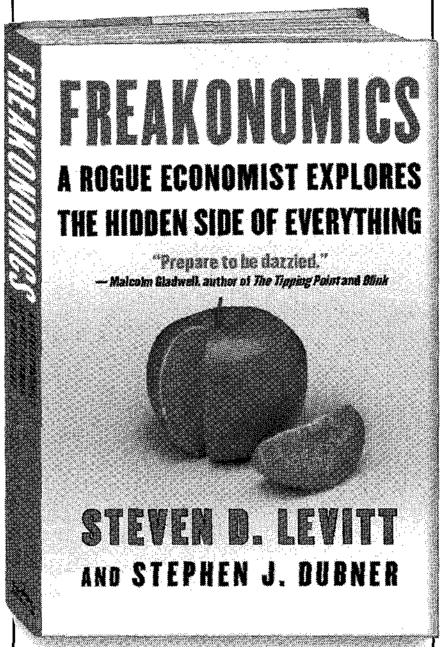
What is FREAKONOMICS?

A. A new Icelandic techno band.

B. A line of teen clothing made from duct tape.

C. The academic study of bearded ladies and sword swallowers.

D. What you get when a world-class economist tackles such subjects as lazy real-estate agents, cheating teachers, and crack-selling mama's boys.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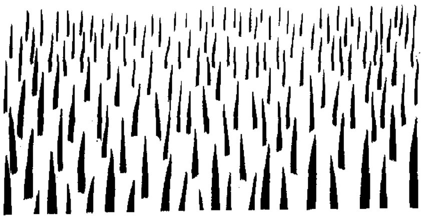
the mountains of Persia they stopped to conquer the Assassins, an extreme Shiite sect that terrorized neighboring rulers by sending young men on suicide missions to kill them. The young men were drugged with hashish (source of the word "assassin") and were told that when they died they would immediately go to Paradise, where women and other pleasures awaited. In no-quarter sieges, Hulagu battered the Assassins out of their mountain fortresses with his heavy weapons, and then destroyed them root and branch. Later historians agreed that in this, at least, he did the world a favor.

By 1257, Hulagu had reached western Persia. From there he sent emissaries to the caliph telling him to raze the walls of Baghdad and fill in the moat and come in person to make obeisance to Hulagu. The caliph replied that with all of Islam ready to defend him, he did not fear. He advised Hulagu to go back where he came from. The Mongol army had recently received reinforcements from other Mongol hordes, and a contingent of Christian cavalry from Georgia. Perhaps the Mongols had eight hundred and fifty thousand soldiers; certainly they had more than a hundred thousand. In November of 1257, they marched on toward Baghdad, dividing as they approached so that their forces would surround the city. The caliph sent an army to stop those approaching from the west, and repulsed them in an early battle. In the next encounter, the Mongols broke some dikes and flooded the ground behind the caliph's army, and slaughtered or drowned them all.

Mustasim, the caliph, was not of a character equal to such large problems. He is described as a weak, vacillating layabout who liked to drink sherbet and keep company with musicians and clowns. Worse, from a strategic point of view, Mustasim had recently angered the Shiites by various insults and offenses, such as throwing the poem of a famous Shiite poet in the river. Now vengeful Shiites volunteered help to the Mongols in Mosul and other places along their march. The caliph's vizier, or chief minister, was himself a Shiite of uncertain loyalty. Islamic opinion afterward held that the vizier, al-Alkamzi, vilely betrayed the caliph and conspired with the Mongols; an exhortation in Muslim school books used to say, "Let him be cursed of God who curses not al-Alkamzi." As fighting began, Hulagu, acknowledging the importance of Shiite support, prudently posted guard detachments of a hundred Mongol horsemen at the most sacred Shiite shrines in Najef and Karbala.

On January 29, 1258, Hulagu's forces took up a position on the eastern outskirts of Baghdad and began a bombardment. Soon they had breached the outer wall. The caliph, who had been advised against escaping by his vizier, offered to negotiate. Hulagu, with the city practically in his hands, refused. The upshot was that the caliph and his retinue came out of the city, the remainder of his army followed, they laid down their arms, and the Mongols killed almost everybody. Hulagu told Baghdad's Christians to stay in a church, which he put off-limits to his soldiers. Then, for a period of seven days, the Mongols sacked the city, killing (depending on the source) two hundred thousand, or eight hundred thousand, or more than a million. The Mongols' Georgian Christian allies were said to have particularly distinguished themselves in slaughter. Plunderers threw away their swords and filled their scabbards with gold. Silver and jewels and gold piled up in great heaps around Hulagu's tent. Fire consumed the caliph's palace, and the smoke from its beams of aloe wood, sandalwood, and ebony filled the air with fragrance for a distance of a hundred *li*. (A *li* equalled five hundred bow lengths—a hundred *li* was maybe thirty miles.) So many books from Baghdad's libraries were flung into the Tigris that a horse could walk across on them. The river ran black with scholars' ink and red with the blood of martyrs.

The stories of what Hulagu did to the caliph vary. One says that Hulagu toyed with him a while, dining with him and discussing theology and pretending to be his guest. A famous account describes how Hulagu imprisoned the caliph in a roomful of treasure and brought him gold on a tray instead of food. The caliph protested that he could not eat gold, and Hulagu asked him why he hadn't used his money to strengthen his army and defend against the Mongols. The caliph said, "That was the will of God." Hulagu replied, "What will happen to you is the will of God, also," leaving him among the treasure to starve.



Many sources agree that there was fear of an earthquake or other shock to nature occurring if the caliph's sacred blood was spilled. Learned Shiites advised Hulagu that no catastrophes had followed the bloody deaths of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, or the Shiite saint Hosein, so he should go ahead. To be safe, Hulagu had the caliph wrapped in a carpet and then trodden to death by horses. He also killed all the caliph's family, except for his youngest son and a daughter. The daughter was shipped off to Mongolia to be a slave in the harem of Mongke Khan.

Amassing large harems was an important occupation of the khans. Genghis Khan was said to have had five hundred wives and concubines. When the Mongols overran a place, their captains took some of the women and passed along the more beautiful ones to their superiors, who passed the more beautiful to their superiors, and so on all the way to the khan, who could choose among the pulchritude of a continent. Genghis Khan had scores of children, as did other khans and nobles descended from him for centuries in the Genghis Khanite line.

Recently, a geneticist at Oxford University, Dr. Chris Tyler-Smith, and geneticists from China and central Asia took blood samples from populations living in regions near the former Mongol empire, and they studied the Y chromosomes. These are useful in establishing lineage because Y chromosomes continue from father to son. Dr. Tyler-Smith and his colleagues found that an anomalously large number of the Y chromosomes carried a genetic signature indicating descent from a single common ancestor about a thousand years ago. The scientists theorized that the ancestor was Genghis Khan (or, more exactly, an eleventh-century ancestor of Genghis Khan). About eight per cent of all males in the region studied, or sixteen million men, possess this chromosome signature. That's a half per cent of the world's entire male population. It is possible, therefore, that more than thirty-two million people in the world today are descended from Genghis Khan.

The destruction of Baghdad marked the high point of Hulagu's career. From Baghdad he intended to go on and conquer Egypt, but he failed at that. After the death of Mongke Khan, in 1259, the struggle for succession took him away from the campaign. The Mongols did manage to waste a lot of Syria, but then a smaller Mongol army met up with an army of Mameluke slave mercenaries from Egypt who defeated them and captured and killed Kit-Buqa, Hulagu's best general. (Kit-Buqa, by the way, was another Christian in Hulagu's entourage.) The killing of such a distinguished person was usually a warrant for swift revenge, but the Egyptians were able to overcome the next Mongol force sent against them as well. Like the sack of Baghdad, the Egyptians' defeat of the Mongols was a moment at which history turned. As a result, Islamic culture in Cairo did not get crushed by the Mongols, and so for a time Egypt became the center of Islam; and the Mongols never extended their power beyond Asia into Africa.

By his cruelty to the caliph, Hulagu may have caused himself unexpected trouble. Berke, his cousin, the leader of the Golden Horde of Mongols on the steppes of Russia, had recently converted to Islam. After Baghdad fell, he perhaps was angry at the insult to his faith; he moved to attack Hulagu, who had to make his way to Azerbaijan to defend against this new enemy. The presence of a serious threat from fellow-Mongols on his northern flank effectively boxed Hulagu in, and he attempted no more major conquests. In the cities he had won along the Tigris and Euphrates, he put his viceroys in power, and rewarded some of the helpful Shiites. For the Persian Shiite astronomer Nasir-al-Din Tusi, who had abetted the Mongols ever since they freed him from the Assassins, Hulagu built a costly observatory, which later produced the first scientifically accurate explanation of the rainbow. Nasir-al-Din Tusi asked Hulagu to make him the caliph, but Hulagu refused. No caliph would ever reign again in Baghdad, nor would Islam have another capital to match that city in its prime.

Hulagu left three thousand Mongols in Baghdad to rebuild it, but they did not accomplish much. Decades later, it was still mostly a ruin. Some irrigation systems that the Mongol army destroyed were not repaired until Iraq began to get money from its oil in the twentieth century. Mongols had no real talent for building, anyway. Plague and famine and disintegration followed the Mongol incursion. Places they conquered sometimes had to be resubdued. The city of Mosul, which had submitted almost eagerly to Mongol rule at first, changed its attitude afterward, when a new malik, or prince, came to power there. Under his leadership the inhabitants of Mosul—Kurds, Arabs, and some tribal people—rebelled and forted themselves up behind the city walls, and the Mongols put them under siege.

During one attack, a number of Mongol soldiers climbed over Mosul's walls, only to be surrounded and killed to a man. The defenders then cut off the Mongols' heads, put the heads in a catapult, and fired them back at the Mongols outside. This effrontery brought out Hulagu's sternest side. After his forces finally took the city, he ordered the malik to be brought to him. Then he had the malik fastened tightly inside a fresh sheepskin and left in the sun, where vermin ate him alive for a month until he died.

Hulagu ruled his domains as il-khan not from Iraq but from western Persia and the city of Maragha. His governing style seems to have been a combination of the savage and the practical. When some of his subjects came before him complaining of a maker of files who had killed one of their relatives, he took the matter under consideration. He inquired first about the number of makers of files in his territories and found they were few. Mongols needed files. A file was part of the basic equipment of every Mongol soldier, essential for keeping his arrows sharp. On further inquiry Hulagu learned that the number of pack-saddle makers, however, was large. He then informed the plaintiffs that they could have their revenge, but it must be on a maker of pack saddles rather than on the offending maker of files. When the plaintiffs objected, Hulagu got rid of them by giving them a cow.

Hulagu had epilepsy, and its seizures increased in frequency as he got older. In 1264 he became troubled at the appearance of a comet. He never recovered

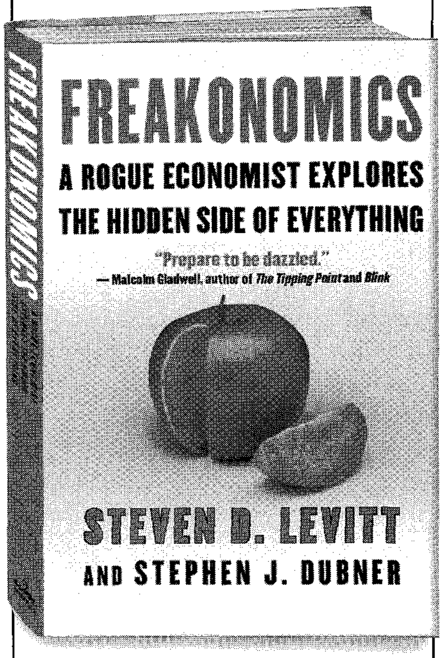
What does FREAKONOMICS reveal?

A. How the Ku Klux Klan resembles a group of real-estate agents.

B. What sumo wrestlers, schoolteachers and terrorists have in common.

C. Why parenting technique doesn't matter as much as you think.

D. All of the above.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from this portent, and in February of 1265, possibly as a result of a seizure, he died. Beautiful maidens were sacrificed to accompany him in his tomb. Dokuz-khatun, his Christian wife, died four months later. He was about forty-eight years old.

The dynasty of Hulagid il-khans ruled until about 1335. Afterward, there followed a period of unrest and rebellions, with struggles between Turks and Persian Mongols for power in Baghdad. Then, in 1401, the unhappy city, always prone to disasters, suffered another huge one: Timur-Lenk, or (as Westerners called him) Tamerlane. This Turkic tribal leader from the vicinity of Samarkand was not himself a Mongol, though he admired and emulated the Mongols. He was a devout Muslim, a student of the Koran, one of the best chess players of his day, and a remorseless general whose cruelty shocked even the troops he led. At the head of a Mongol-Turkic army, Tamerlane destroyed kingdoms from the eastern Mediterranean to Russia to India. In 1393, he came to Baghdad and went comparatively easy on it because the inhabitants did not resist. In 1401, however, they did, and Tamerlane gave the city a trashing that finished off most of what the Mongols had overlooked.

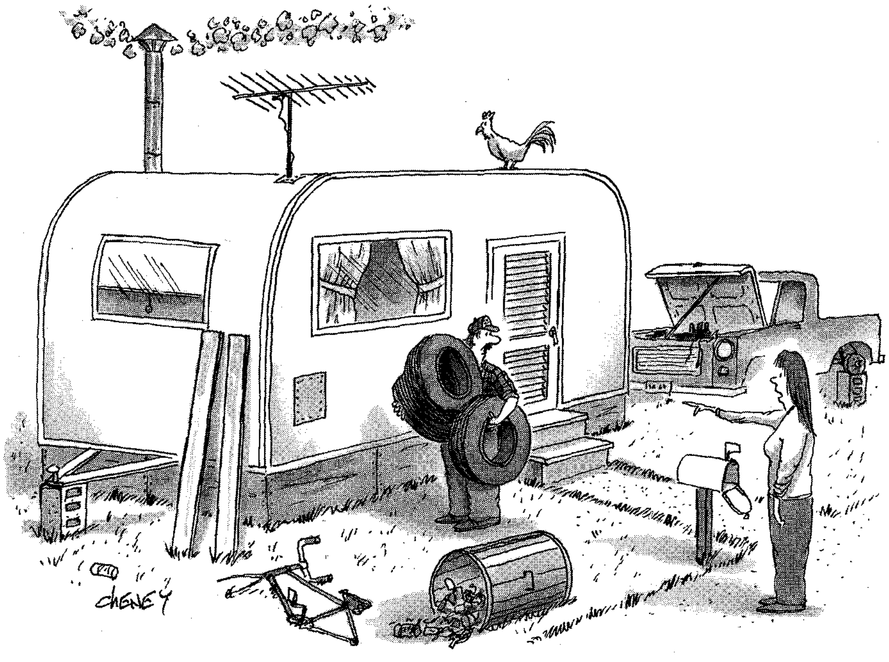
Tamerlane's thing was building pyramids out of heads. When his forces took Baghdad, he spared almost no one, and ordered that each of his ninety thousand soldiers bring him a head (some sources say two) or lose his own life. The thousands of heads were piled into towers. Tamerlane also said not to destroy hospitals and mosques, a small concession by a Muslim to the former capital of his faith. Nonetheless, thanks to him and to Hulagu, almost no architecture from the golden days of Harun al-Rashid has survived. Baghdad would not be a city of any consequence for another five hundred years, until its strategic location and Iraq's oil attracted the attention of world powers.

Many Muslims believe that the Mongol destruction of Baghdad and of the caliphate was the worst misfortune ever to befall Islam. With it, the faith's first period of flowering came to a decisive close (though its actual decline had, of course, begun earlier). Historical speculations about what might have been if the disaster had never occurred go in various directions, some tending toward the wild. A book on Arab cultural identity published in the nineteen-fifties quoted a high official in the Syrian government who said that if the Mongols hadn't destroyed the libraries of Baghdad, Arab science would have produced the atom bomb long before the West. Recently, when TV stations everywhere were replaying the video of a U.S. marine shooting a wounded prisoner in a mosque in Falluja, a newspaper story about Arab reaction to the incident said that a retired army officer in Cairo said that the Americans were "acting like Genghis Khan." He had the wrong Mongol, but his drift was ancient and familiar.

Given the history, one can see why Hulagu might be in the front of Osama bin Laden's mind when he thinks about wars in Iraq. Among Muslims, bin Laden's mention of the Americans and the Mongols in the same breath likely found a deep emotional response. But, emotion aside, it is not accurate to say that in the first Gulf War Dick Cheney and Colin Powell destroyed Baghdad worse than Hulagu. Even with modern weapons, they didn't come close to the apocalyptic effect Hulagu achieved. American troops didn't go into the city in that war, and they killed far fewer people than the best estimates of fatalities caused by Hulagu. In fact, the first Gulf War also didn't kill as many in Baghdad as Tamerlane did, or even as the Ottomans did in their defeat of the Persians in 1638. In the category of inflicters of death and destruction upon the city of Baghdad, Cheney and Powell (Gulf War I) are somewhere on a crowded list, not at its top. Bin Laden isn't a person you expect to do a lot of fact-checking of his statements, but in this one he is far off even for him.

If he really believes what he said, though, you can kind of follow his logic: America equals the Mongols; the Mongols spared no one; therefore any violence against such a scourge is justified. History may be useful to know, but when people start thinking of themselves in terms of history with a capital "H," look out. Before America invaded Iraq, when supporters of the invasion predicted that it would be "the hinge of history," deep and scary misgivings hovered nearby. Who knows just what or where the hinge of history will turn out to be, or in which direction it will swing? The history of your own time is a picture you're usually too close to to see. Your all-important sense of proportion disappears, as did bin Laden's. Exploitative and destructive as the West can be, it's not in a league with the Mongols. It does not routinely destroy everything in its path and leave only ruins and corpses and jackals behind. I mean, come on.

When the British kicked the Turkish Army out of southern Iraq in the First World War, General Stanley Maude, the



"Put them on the right side of the door and sort of scatter them around."

British commander, issued a proclamation in which he declared himself in charge of the region, and added that his armies came not "as conquerors or enemies but as liberators." Then, addressing the people of Baghdad province, he said, "Since the days of Hulagu, your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage." The British planned to rectify this by giving Iraq a constitutional monarchy like theirs. Iraq had only three million people then, and nowhere near the firepower that's lying around there today, but still parts of the country sustained an insurgency that killed four hundred and fifty British soldiers, wounded many more, and went on for more than six months. Because of these and other difficulties, the Iraqis didn't elect their first parliamentary assembly until 1925, eight years after the British occupation began. A major force of British troops remained in Iraq until 1927. Iraqi independence didn't come until five years later, in 1932.

After independence, the unrest and assassinations and street violence continued with a sporadic persistence that was hard to keep track of. Early in the Second World War, a coup by Iraqi Army officers sympathetic to the Nazis led to another British invasion, and a reinstallation of the young king and his regent, whom the coup had run out. During this occupation and before it, pogroms killed hundreds of Baghdad's Jews. The establishment of a Jewish state in Israel aroused Iraq's permanent fury. Iraq sent troops to every Arab war against Israel and never made peace afterward; formally, it has been in a continuous state of war with Israel since 1948. In 1958, another military coup killed the king, Faisal II, and all his family. Then, in 1963, assassins from the Baath Party killed the general who had led the coup. The smartest and most murderous among the Baathists turned out to be Saddam Hussein.

Less than a year after General Maude made his proclamation, he died in Baghdad of cholera, possibly brought on by drinking unpasturized milk in his coffee at a celebration in his honor. Maude had been right, and historically well informed, to say that Baghdad and environs had never recovered since Hulagu. That Iraq would be an even bigger mess in the century to come was a development he probably did not foresee.

One of Iraq's problems has always been that it is too easy to get to. Major long-distance routes, both by sea and by land, converge in it; its geography let Hulagu and Tamerlane, not to mention Arabs and Turks and Persians and Egyptian Mamelukes and more, go breezing through. Had Baghdad's surroundings been thickly forested, Hulagu might have declined to invade. Mongol horsemen did not like trees tangling them up and annoying them. Were Iraq's landscapes more complicated—by snow-covered mountains, like Afghanistan's, or thick jungles, like Vietnam's—American troops might not be in Iraq today. To American planners of the current war, Iraq looked like the perfect theatre for the lighter and faster military forces they favored.

Easy-to-get-to places eventually are subject to whatever power happens to be abroad in the world. America was lucky for centuries to have oceans as obstacles on either side. Everything important seemed to be here; troubles elsewhere could be safely ignored. The other day, as I walked by the World Trade Center site, with its immense, fraught blankness extending above, I reflected that I never used to take the "world" in that name seriously. I thought it was a grandiloquism for "American," like the "world" in the name World Series. When guests came to visit from out of town, I sometimes brought them to the observation deck on the top of World Trade Tower No. 2, not for the view of the city (the Empire State's was better) but for the broad prospect of geography it afforded, with the islands to the south, the distant fragment of ocean, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, and the green expanse of New Jersey almost at our feet.

From that crow's-nest vantage you could imagine seeing even farther, around the bend of the earth, to the rest of the country opening out to the west endlessly. As we stood looking, we were in America, and only there. Never for a minute did I think we were actually in the world. ♦

ROUGH JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

From the Washington Post.

The NFL fined safety Sean Taylor $12,500 yesterday for two infractions during tomorrow's 31-7 victory over the New York Giants.

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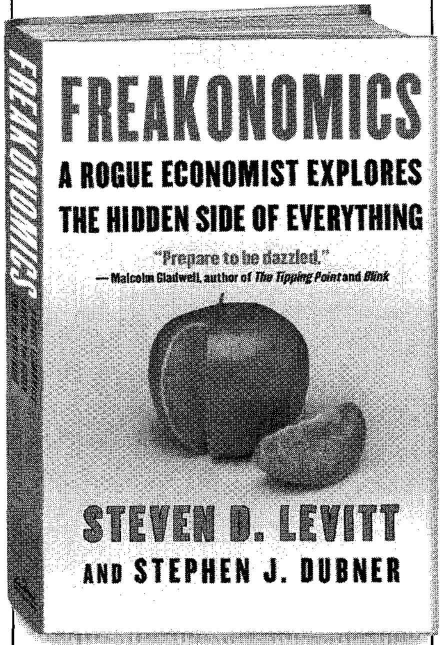
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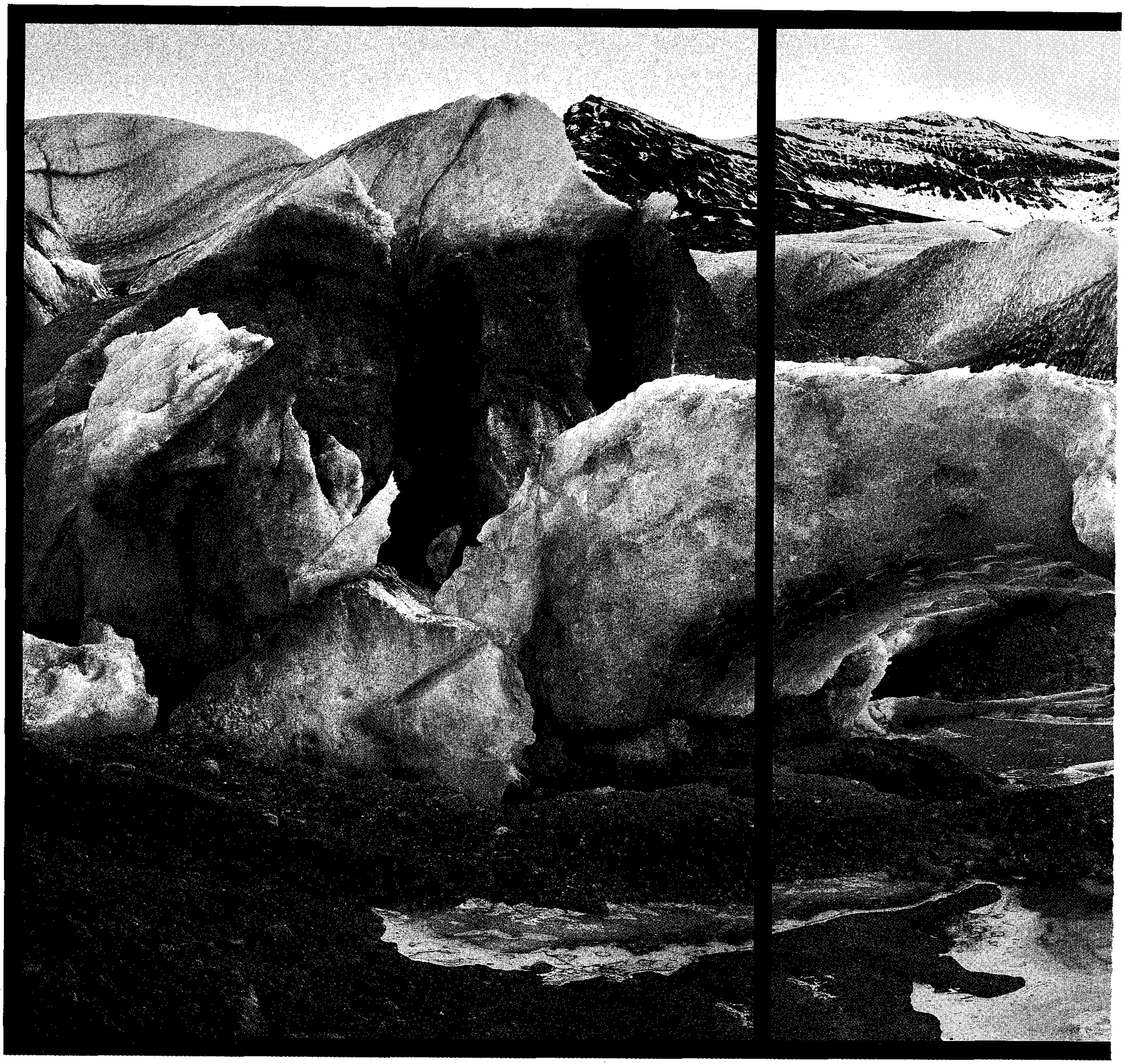


ANNALS OF SCIENCE

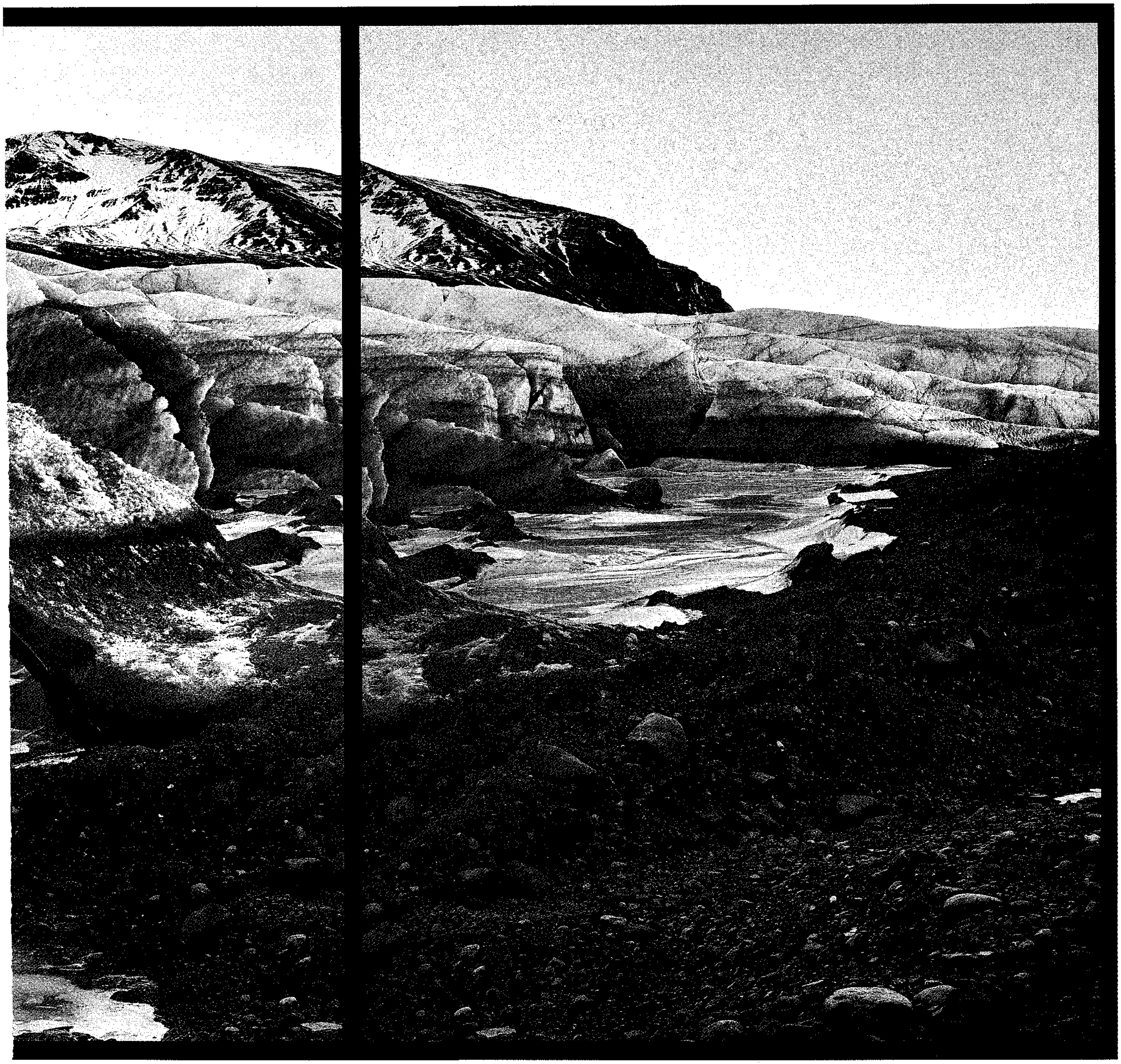
THE CLIMATE OF MAN—I

Disappearing islands, thawing permafrost, melting polar ice. How the earth is changing.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

The Alaskan village of Shishmaref sits on an island known as Sarichef, five miles off the coast of the Seward Peninsula. Sarichef is a small island—no more than a quarter of a mile across and two and a half miles long—and Shishmaref is basically the only thing on it. To the north is the Chukchi Sea, and in every other direction lies the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, which probably ranks as one of the least visited national parks in the country. During the last ice age, the land bridge—exposed by a drop in sea levels of more than three hundred feet—grew to be nearly a thousand miles wide. The preserve occupies that part of it which, after more than ten thousand years of warmth, still remains above water.

Shishmaref (pop. 591) is an Inupiat village, and it has been inhabited, at least on a seasonal basis, for several centuries. As in many native villages in Alaska,



life there combines—often disconcertingly—the very ancient and the totally modern. Almost everyone in Shishmaref still lives off subsistence hunting, primarily for bearded seals but also for walrus, moose, rabbit, and migrating birds. When I visited the village one day last April, the spring thaw was under way, and the seal-hunting season was about to begin. (Wandering around, I almost tripped over the remnants of the previous year's catch emerging from storage under the snow.) At noon, the village's transportation planner, Tony Weyiouanna, invited me to his house for lunch. In the living room, an enormous television set tuned to the local public-access station was playing a rock soundtrack. Messages like "Happy Birthday to the following elders . . ." kept scrolling across the screen.

Traditionally, the men in Shishmaref hunted for seals by driving out over the sea ice with dogsleds or, more recently, on snowmobiles. After they hauled the seals back to the village, the women would skin and cure them, a process that takes several weeks. In the early nineteen-nineties, the hunters began to notice that the sea ice was changing. (Although the claim that the Eskimos have hundreds of words for snow is an exaggeration, the Inupiat make distinctions among many different types of ice, including *sikuliaq*, "young ice," *sarri*, "pack ice," and *tuvaq*, "landlocked ice.") The ice was starting to form later in the fall, and also to break up earlier in the spring. Once, it had been possible to drive out twenty miles; now, by the time the seals arrived, the ice was mushy half that distance from shore. Weyiouanna described it as having the consistency of a "slush puppy." When you encounter it, he said, "your hair starts sticking

Iceland's Svínafellsjökull. Nearly every major glacier in the world is shrinking. Photograph by James Balog.

up. Your eyes are wide open. You can't even blink." It became too dangerous to hunt using snowmobiles, and the men switched to boats.

Soon, the changes in the sea ice brought other problems. At its highest point, Shishmaref is only twenty-two feet above sea level, and the houses, many built by the U.S. government, are small, boxy, and not particularly sturdy-looking. When the Chukchi Sea froze early, the layer of ice protected the village, the way a tarp prevents a swimming pool from getting roiled by the wind. When the sea started to freeze later, Shishmaref became more vulnerable to storm surges. A storm in October, 1997, scoured away a hundred-and-twenty-five-foot-wide strip from the town's northern edge; several houses were destroyed, and more than a dozen had to be relocated. During another storm, in October, 2001, the village was threatened by twelve-foot waves. In the summer of 2002, residents of Shishmaref voted, a hundred and sixty-one to twenty, to move the entire village to the mainland. Last year, the federal government completed a survey of possible sites for a new village. Most of the spots that are being considered are in areas nearly as remote as Sarichef, with no roads or nearby cities, or even settlements. It is estimated that a full relocation will cost at least a hundred and eighty million dollars.

People I spoke to in Shishmaref expressed divided emotions about the proposed move. Some worried that, by leaving the tiny island, they would give up their connection to the sea and become lost. "It makes me feel lonely," one woman said. Others seemed excited by the prospect of gaining certain conveniences, like running water, that Shishmaref lacks. Everyone seemed to agree, though, that the village's situation, already dire, was likely only to get worse.

Morris Kiyutelluk, who is sixty-five, has lived in Shishmaref almost all his life. (His last name, he told me, means "without a wooden spoon.") I spoke to him while I was hanging around the basement of the village church, which also serves as the unofficial headquarters for a group called the Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition. "The first time I heard about global warming, I thought, I don't believe those Japanese," Kiyutelluk told me. "Well, they had some good scientists, and it's become true."

The National Academy of Sciences undertook its first rigorous study of global warming in 1979. At that point, climate modelling was still in its infancy, and only a few groups, one led by Syukuro Manabe, at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and another by James Hansen, at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, had considered in any detail the effects of adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Still, the results of their work were alarming enough that President Jimmy Carter called on the academy to investigate. A nine-member panel was appointed, led by the distinguished meteorologist Jule Charney, of M.I.T.

The Ad Hoc Study Group on Carbon Dioxide and Climate, or the Charney panel, as it became known, met for five days at the National Academy of Sciences' summer study center, in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Its conclusions were unequivocal. Panel members had looked for flaws in the modellers' work but had been unable to find any. "If carbon dioxide continues to increase, the study group finds no reason to doubt that climate changes will result and no reason to believe that these changes will be negligible," the scientists wrote. For a doubling of CO_2 from pre-industrial levels, they put the likely global temperature rise at between two and a half and eight degrees Fahrenheit. The panel members weren't sure how long it would take for changes already set in motion to become manifest, mainly because the climate system has a built-in time delay. It could take "several decades," they noted. For this reason, what might seem like the most conservative approach—waiting for evidence of warming in order to assess the models' accuracy—actually amounted to the riskiest possible strategy: "We may not be given a warning until the CO_2 loading is such that an appreciable climate change is inevitable."

It is now twenty-five years since the Charney panel issued its report, and, in that period, Americans have been alerted to the dangers of global warming so many times that volumes have been written just on the history of efforts to draw attention to the problem. (The National Academy of Sciences alone has issued nearly two hundred reports on global warming; the most recent, "Radiative Forcing of Climate Change," was published just last month.) During this same period, worldwide carbon-dioxide emissions have continued to increase, from five billion billion metric tons a year to seven billion, and the earth's temperature, much as predicted by Manabe's and Hansen's models, has steadily risen. The year 1990 was the warmest year on record until 1991, which was equally hot. Almost every subsequent year has been warmer still. The year 1998 ranks as the hottest year since the instrumental temperature record began, but it is closely followed by 2002 and 2003, which are tied for second; 2001, which is third; and 2004, which is fourth. Since climate is innately changeable, it's difficult to say when, exactly, in this sequence natural variation could be ruled out as the sole cause. The American Geophysical Union, one of the nation's largest and most respected scientific organizations, decided in 2003 that the matter had been settled. At the group's annual meeting that year, it issued a consensus statement declaring, "Natural influences cannot explain the rapid increase in global near-surface temperatures." As best as can be determined, the world is now warmer than it has been at any point in the last two millennia, and, if current trends continue, by the end of the century it will likely be hotter than at any point in the last two million years.

In the same way that global warming has gradually ceased to be merely a theory, so, too, its impacts are no longer just hypothetical. Nearly every major glacier in the world is shrinking; those in Glacier National Park are retreating so quickly it has been estimated that they will vanish entirely by 2030. The oceans are becoming not just warmer but more acidic; the difference between day and nighttime temperatures is diminishing; animals are shifting their ranges poleward; and plants are blooming days, and in some cases weeks, earlier than they used to. These are the warning signs that the Charney panel cautioned against waiting for, and while in many parts of the globe they are still subtle enough to be overlooked, in others they can no longer be ignored. As it happens, the most dramatic changes are occurring in those places, like Shishmaref, where the fewest people tend to live. This disproportionate effect of global warming in the far north was also predicted by early climate models, which forecast, in column after column of FORTRAN-generated figures, what today can be measured and observed directly: the Arctic is melting.

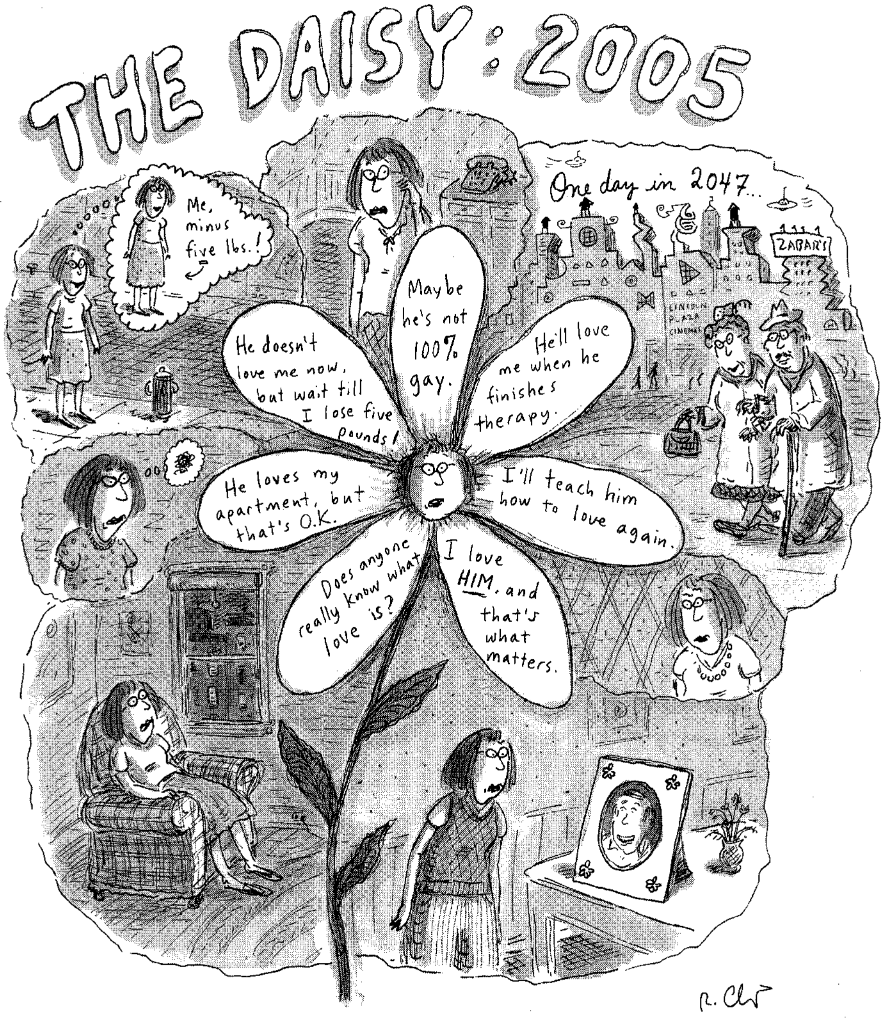
Most of the land in the Arctic, and nearly a quarter of all the land in the Northern Hemisphere—some five and a half billion acres—is underlaid by zones of permafrost. A few months after I visited Shishmaref, I took a trip through the interior of Alaska with Vladimir Romanovsky, a geophysicist and permafrost expert at the University of Alaska. I flew into Fairbanks, where Romanovsky lives, and when I arrived the whole city was enveloped in a dense haze that looked like fog but smelled like burning rubber. People kept telling me that I was lucky I hadn't come a couple of weeks earlier, when it had been much worse. "Even the dogs were wearing masks," one woman I met said. I must have smiled. "I am not joking," she told me.

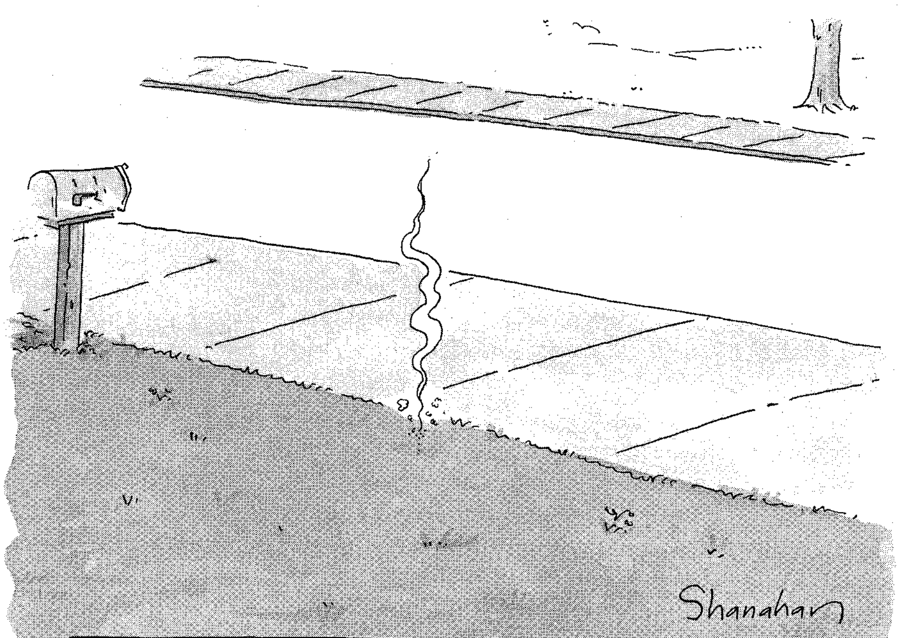
Fairbanks, Alaska's second-largest city, is surrounded on all sides by forest, and virtually every summer lightning sets off fires in these forests, which fill the air with smoke for a few days or, in bad years, weeks. This past summer, the fires started early, in June, and were still burning two and a half months later; by the time of my visit, in late August, a record 6.3 million acres—an area roughly the size of New Hampshire—had been incinerated. The severity of the fires was clearly linked to the weather, which had been exceptionally hot and dry; the average summertime temperature in Fairbanks was the highest on record, and the amount of rainfall was the third lowest.

On my second day in Fairbanks, Romanovsky picked me up at my hotel for an underground tour of the city. Like most permafrost experts, he is from Russia. (The Soviets more or less invented the study of permafrost when they decided to build their gulags in Siberia.) A broad man with shaggy brown hair and a square jaw, Romanovsky as a student had had to choose between playing professional hockey and becoming a geophysicist. He had opted for the latter, he told me, because "I was little bit better scientist than hockey player." He went on to earn two master's degrees and two Ph.D.s. Romanovsky came to get me at 10 A.M.; owing to all the smoke, it looked like dawn.

Any piece of ground that has remained frozen for at least two years is, by definition, permafrost. In some places, like eastern Siberia, permafrost runs nearly a mile deep; in Alaska, it varies from a couple of hundred feet to a couple of thousand feet deep. Fairbanks, which is just below the Arctic Circle, is situated in a region of discontinuous permafrost, meaning that the city is freckled with regions of frozen ground. One of the first stops on Romanovsky's tour was a hole that had opened up in a patch of permafrost not far from his house. It was about six feet wide and five feet deep. Nearby were the outlines of other, even bigger holes, which, Romanovsky told me, had been filled with gravel by the local public-works department. The holes, known as thermokarsts, had appeared suddenly when the permafrost gave way, like a rotting floorboard. (The technical term for thawed permafrost is talik, from a Russian word meaning "not frozen.") Across the road, Romanovsky pointed out a long trench running into the woods. The trench, he explained, had been formed when a wedge of underground ice had melted. The spruce trees that had been growing next to it, or perhaps on top of it, were now listing at odd angles, as if in a gale. Locally, such trees are called "drunken." A few of the spruces had fallen over. "These are very drunk," Romanovsky said.

In Alaska, the ground is riddled with ice wedges that were created during the last glaciation, when the cold earth cracked and the cracks filled with water. The wedges, which can be dozens or even hundreds of feet deep, tended to form in networks, so that when they melt they leave behind connecting diamond- or hexagonal-shaped depressions. A few blocks beyond the drunken forest, we came to a house where the front yard showed clear signs of ice-wedge melt-


THE DAISY: 2005
Me, minus five lbs.!
One day in 2047...
ZABAR'S
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS
Maybe he's not 100% gay.
He'll love me when he finishes therapy.
He doesn't love me now, but wait till I lose five pounds!
He loves my apartment, but that's O.K.
I'll teach him how to love again.
Does anyone really know what love is?
I love HIM, and that's what matters.



THE IMAGINARY PLAYMATE MEETS THE INVISIBLE FENCE

off. The owner, trying to make the best of things, had turned the yard into a miniature-golf course. Around the corner, Romanovsky pointed out a house—no longer occupied—that had basically split in two; the main part was leaning to the right and the garage toward the left. The house had been built in the sixties or early seventies; it had survived until almost a decade ago, when the permafrost under it started to degrade. Romanovsky's mother-in-law used to own two houses on the same block. He had urged her to sell them both. He pointed out one, now under new ownership; its roof had developed an ominous-looking ripple. (When Romanovsky went to buy his own house, he looked only in permafrost-free areas.)

"Ten years ago, nobody cared about permafrost," he told me. "Now everybody wants to know." Measurements that Romanovsky and his colleagues at the University of Alaska have made around Fairbanks show that the temperature of the permafrost has risen to the point where, in many places, it is now less than one degree below freezing. In places where permafrost has been disturbed, by roads or houses or lawns, much of it is already thawing. Romanovsky has also been monitoring the permafrost on the North Slope and has found that there, too, are regions where the permafrost is very nearly thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit. While the age of permafrost is difficult to determine, Romanovsky estimates that most of it in Alaska probably dates back to the beginning of the last glacial cycle. This means that if it thaws it will be doing so for the first time in more than a hundred and twenty thousand years. "It's really a very interesting time," he said.

The next morning, Romanovsky picked me up at seven. We were going to drive from Fairbanks nearly five hundred miles north to the town of Deadhorse, on Prudhoe Bay, to collect data from electronic monitoring stations that Romanovsky had set up. Since the road was largely unpaved, he had rented a truck for the occasion. Its windshield was cracked in several places. When I suggested this could be a problem, Romanovsky assured me that it was "typical Alaska." For provisions, he had brought along an oversized bag of Tostitos.

The road that we were travelling on had been built for Alaskan oil, and the pipeline followed it, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right. (Because of the permafrost, the pipeline runs mostly aboveground, on pilings.) Trucks kept passing us, some with severed caribou heads strapped to their roofs, others advertising the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. About two hours outside Fairbanks, we started to pass through tracts of forest that had recently burned, then tracts that were still smoldering, and, finally, tracts that were still, intermittently, in flames. The scene was part Dante, part "Apocalypse Now." We crawled along through the smoke. Beyond the town of Coldfoot—really just a gas station—we passed the tree line. An evergreen was marked with a plaque that read "Farthest North Spruce Tree on the Alaska Pipeline: Do Not Cut." Predictably, someone had taken a knife to it. A deep gouge around the trunk was bound with duct tape. "I think it will die," Romanovsky said.

Finally, at around five in the afternoon, we reached the turnoff for the first monitoring station. Because one of Romanovsky's colleagues had nursed dreams—never realized—of travelling to it by plane, it was near a small airstrip, on the far side of a river. We pulled on rubber boots and forded the river, which, owing to the lack of rain, was running low. The site consisted of a few posts sunk into the tundra; a solar panel; a two-hundred-foot-deep borehole with heavy-gauge wire sticking out of it; and a white container, resembling an ice chest, that held computer equipment. The solar panel, which the previous summer had been mounted a few feet off the ground, was now resting on the scrub. At first, Romanovsky speculated that this was a result of vandalism, but after inspecting things more closely he decided that it was the work of a bear. While he hooked up a laptop computer to one of the monitors inside the white container, my job was to keep an eye out for wildlife.

For the same reason that it is sweaty in a coal mine—heat flux from the center of the earth—permafrost gets warmer the farther down you go. Under equilibrium conditions—which is to say, when the climate is stable—the very warmest temperatures in a borehole will be found at the bottom and they will decrease steadily as you go higher. In these circumstances, the lowest temperature will be found at the permafrost's surface, so that, plotted on a graph, the results will be a tilted line. In recent decades, though, the temperature profile of Alaska's permafrost has drooped. Now, instead of a straight line, what you get is shaped more like a sickle. The permafrost is still warmest at the very bottom, but instead of being coldest at the top it is coldest somewhere in the middle, and warmer again toward the surface. This is an unambiguous sign that the climate is heating up.

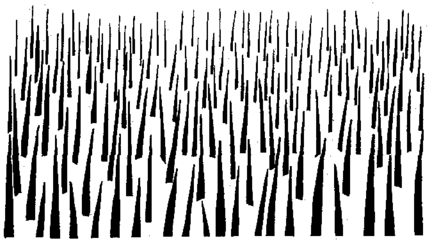
"It's very difficult to look at trends in air temperature, because it's so variable," Romanovsky explained after we were back in the truck, bouncing along toward Deadhorse. It turned out that he had brought the Tostitos to stave off not hunger but fatigue—the crunching, he said, kept him awake—and by now the bag was more than half empty. "So one year you have around Fairbanks a mean annual temperature of zero"—thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit—"and you say, 'Oh yeah, it's warming,' and other years you have a mean annual temperature of minus six"—twenty-one degrees Fahrenheit—"and everybody says, 'Where? Where is your global warming?' In the air temperature, the signal is very small compared to noise. What permafrost does is it works as a low-pass filter. That's why we can see trends much easier in permafrost temperatures than we can see them in atmosphere." In most parts of Alaska, the permafrost has warmed by three degrees since the early nineteen-eighties. In some parts of the state, it has warmed by nearly six degrees.

When you walk around in the Arctic, you are stepping not on permafrost but on something called the "active layer." The active layer, which can be anywhere from a few inches to a few feet deep, freezes in the winter but thaws over the summer, and it is what supports the growth of plants—large spruce trees in places where conditions are favorable enough and, where they aren't, shrubs and, finally, just lichen. Life in the active layer proceeds much as it does in more temperate regions, with one critical difference. Temperatures are so low that when trees and grasses die they do not fully decompose. New plants grow out of the half-rotted old ones, and when these plants die the same thing happens all over again. Eventually, through a process known as cryoturbation, organic matter is pushed down beneath the active layer into the permafrost, where it can sit for thousands of years in a botanical version of suspended animation. (In Fairbanks, grass that is still green has been found in permafrost dating back to the middle of the last ice age.) In this way, much like a peat bog or, for that matter, a coal deposit, permafrost acts as a storage unit for accumulated carbon.

One of the risks of rising temperatures is that this storage process can start to run in reverse. Under the right conditions, organic material that has been frozen for millennia will break down, giving off carbon dioxide or methane, which is an even more powerful greenhouse gas. In parts of the Arctic, this is already happening. Researchers in Sweden, for example, have been measuring the methane output of a bog known as the Stordalen mire, near the town of Abisko, for almost thirty-five years. As the permafrost in the area has warmed, methane releases have increased, in some spots by up to sixty per cent. Thawing permafrost could make the active layer more hospitable to plants, which are a sink for carbon. Even this, though, probably wouldn't offset the release of greenhouse gases. No one knows exactly how much carbon is stored in the world's permafrost, but estimates run as high as four hundred and fifty billion metric tons.

"It's like ready-use mix—just a little heat, and it will start cooking," Romanovsky told me. It was the day after we had arrived in Deadhorse, and we were driving through a steady drizzle out to another monitoring site. "I think it's just a time bomb, just waiting for a little warmer conditions." Romanovsky was wearing a rain suit over his canvas work clothes. I put on a rain suit that he had brought along for me. He pulled a tarp out of the back of the truck.

Whenever he has had funding, Romanovsky has added new monitoring sites to his network. There are now sixty of them, and while we were on the North Slope he spent all day and also part of the night—it stayed light until nearly eleven—rushing from one to the next. At each site, the routine was more or less the same. First, Romanovsky would hook up his computer to the data logger, which had been recording permafrost temperatures on an hourly basis since the previous summer. (When it was raining, he would perform this step hunched under the tarp.) Then he would take out a metal probe shaped like a "T" and poke it into the ground at regular intervals, measuring the depth of the active layer. The probe was a metre long, which, it turned out, was no longer quite long enough. The summer had been so warm that almost everywhere the active layer had grown deeper, in some spots by just a few centimetres, in other spots by more than that; in places where the active layer was particularly deep, Romanovsky had had to work out a new way of measuring it using the probe and a wooden ruler. Eventually, he explained, the heat that had gone into increasing the depth of the active layer would work its way downward, bringing the permafrost that much closer to the thawing point. "Come back next year," he advised me.



On the last day I spent on the North Slope, a friend of Romanovsky's, Nicolai Panikov, a microbiologist at the Stevens Institute of Technology, in New Jersey, arrived. Panikov had come to collect cold-loving microörganisms known as psychrophiles. He was planning to study these organisms in order to determine whether they could have functioned in the sort of conditions that, it is believed, were once found on Mars. Panikov told me that he was quite convinced that Martian life existed—or, at least, had existed. Romanovsky expressed his opinion on this by rolling his eyes; nevertheless, he had agreed to help Panikov dig up some permafrost.

That day, I also flew with Romanovsky by helicopter to a small island in the Arctic Ocean, where he had set up yet another monitoring site. The island, just north of the seventieth parallel, was a bleak expanse of mud dotted with little clumps of yellowing vegetation. It was filled with ice wedges that were starting to melt, creating a network of polygonal depressions. The weather was cold and wet, so while Romanovsky hunched under his tarp I stayed in the helicopter and chatted with the pilot. He had lived in Alaska since 1967. "It's definitely gotten warmer since I've been here," he told me. "I have really noticed that."

When Romanovsky emerged, we took

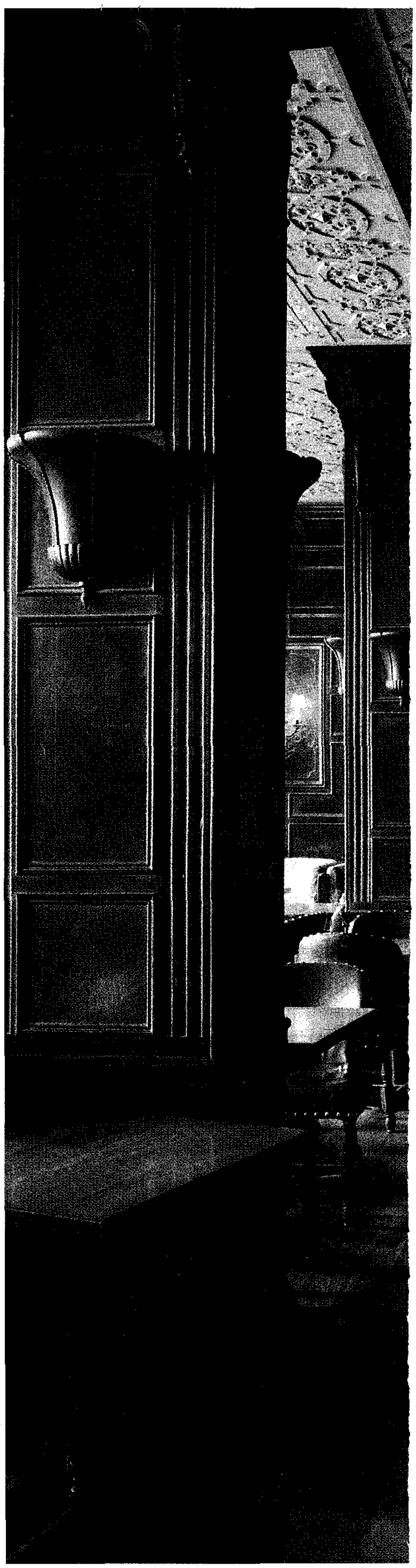
a walk around the island. Apparently, in the spring it had been a nesting site for birds, because everywhere we went there were bits of eggshell and piles of droppings. The island was only about ten feet above sea level, and at the edges it dropped off sharply into the water. Romanovsky pointed out a spot along the shore where the previous summer a series of ice wedges had been exposed. They had since melted, and the ground behind them had given way in a cascade of black mud. In a few years, he said, he expected more ice wedges would be exposed, and then these would melt, causing further erosion. Although the process was different in its mechanics from what was going on in Shishmaref, it had much the same cause and, according to Romanovsky, was likely to have the same result. "Another disappearing island," he said, gesturing toward some freshly exposed bluffs. "It's moving very, very fast."

On September 18, 1997, the Des Groseilliers, a three-hundred-and-eighteen-foot-long icebreaker with a bright-red hull, set out from the town of Tuktoyaktuk, on the Beaufort Sea, and headed north under overcast skies. Normally, the Des Groseilliers, which is based in Québec City, is used by the Canadian Coast Guard, but for this particular journey it was carrying a group of American geophysicists, who were planning to jam it into an ice floe. The scientists were hoping to conduct a series of experiments as they and the ship and the ice floe all drifted, as one, around the Arctic Ocean. The expedition had taken several years to prepare for, and during the planning phase its organizers had carefully consulted the findings of a previous Arctic expedition, which took place back in 1975. Based on those findings, they had decided to look for a floe averaging nine feet thick. But when they reached the area where they planned to overwinter—at seventy-five degrees north latitude—they found that not only were there no floes nine feet thick but there were barely any that reached six feet. One of the scientists on board recalled the reaction on the Des Groseilliers this way: "It was like 'Here we are, all dressed up and nowhere to go.' We imagined calling the sponsors at the National Science Foundation and saying, 'Well, you know, we can't find any ice.' "

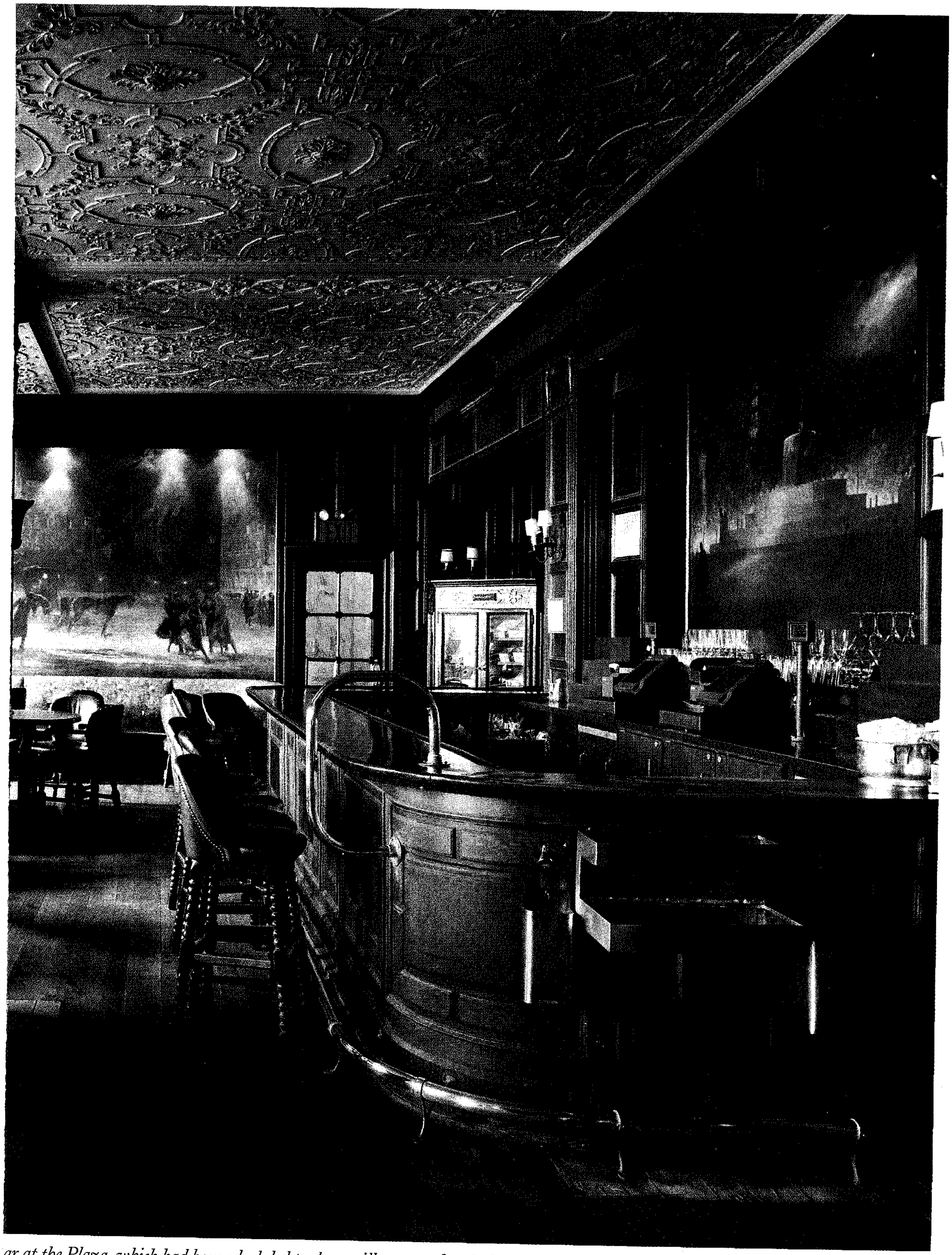
Sea ice in the Arctic comes in two varieties. There is seasonal ice, which forms in the winter and then melts in the summer, and perennial ice, which persists year-round. To the untrained eye, all sea ice looks pretty much the same, but by licking it you can get a good idea of how long a particular piece has been floating around. When ice begins to form in seawater, it forces out the salt, which has no place in the crystal structure. As the ice gets thicker, the rejected salt collects in tiny pockets of brine too highly concentrated to freeze. If you suck on a piece of first-year ice, it will taste salty. Eventually, if the ice survives, these pockets of brine drain out through fine, vein-like channels, and the ice becomes fresher. Multiyear ice is so fresh that if you melt it you can drink it.

The most precise measurements of Arctic sea ice have been made by NASA, using satellites equipped with microwave sensors. In 1979, the satellite data show, perennial sea ice covered 1.7 billion acres, or an area nearly the size of the continental United States. The ice's extent varies from year to year, but since then the overall trend has been strongly downward. The losses have been particularly great in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, and also considerable in the Siberian and Laptev Seas. During this same period, an atmospheric circulation pattern known as the Arctic Oscillation has mostly been in what climatologists call a "positive" mode. The positive Arctic Oscillation is marked by low pressure over the Arctic Ocean, and it tends to produce strong winds and higher temperatures in the far north. No one really knows whether the recent behavior of the Arctic Oscillation is independent of global warming or a product of it. By now, though, the perennial sea ice has shrunk by roughly two hundred and fifty million acres, an area the size of New York, Georgia, and Texas combined. According to mathematical models, even the extended period of a positive Arctic Oscillation can account for only part of this loss.

The researchers aboard the Des Groseilliers knew that the Arctic sea ice was retreating; that was, in fact, why they were there. At the time, however, there wasn't much data on trends in sea-ice depth. (Since then, a limited amount of information on this topic—gathered, for rather different purposes, by nuclear submarines—has been declassified.) Eventu-



NEW LIFE *In a deal reached last week, the Oa*



ar at the Plaza, which had been scheduled to close, will reopen after the hotel is renovated. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

ally, the researchers decided to settle for the best ice floe they could find. They picked one that stretched over some thirty square miles and in some spots was six feet thick, in some spots three. Tents were set up on the floe to house experiments, and a safety protocol was established: anyone venturing out onto the ice had to travel with a buddy and a radio. (Many also carried a gun, in case of polar-bear problems.) Some of the scientists speculated that, since the ice was abnormally thin, it would grow during the expedition. The opposite turned out to be the case. The Des Groseilliers spent twelve months frozen into the floe, and, during that time, it drifted some three hundred miles north. Nevertheless, at the end of the year, the average thickness of the ice had declined, in some spots by as much as a third. By August, 1998, so many of the scientists had fallen through that a new requirement was added to the protocol: anyone who set foot off the ship had to wear a life jacket.

Donald Perovich has studied sea ice for thirty years, and on a rainy day last fall I went to visit him at his office in Hanover, New Hampshire. Perovich works for the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, or CRREL (pronounced "crell"), a division of the U.S. Army established in 1961 in anticipation of a very cold war. (The assumption was that if the Soviets invaded they would probably do so from the north.) He is a tall man with black hair, very black eyebrows, and an earnest manner. His office is decorated with photographs from the Des Groseilliers expedition, for which he served as the lead scientist; there are shots of the ship, the tents, and, if you look closely enough, the bears. One grainy-looking photo shows someone dressed up as Santa Claus, celebrating Christmas out on the ice. "The most fun you could ever have" was how Perovich described the expedition to me.

Perovich's particular area of expertise, in the words of his CRREL biography, is "the interaction of solar radiation with sea ice." During the Des Groseilliers expedition, he spent most of his time monitoring conditions on the floe using a device known as a spectroradiometer. Facing toward the sun, a spectroradiometer measures incident light, and facing toward earth it measures reflected light. If you divide the latter by the former, you get a quantity known as albedo. (The term comes from the Latin word for "whiteness.") During April and May, when conditions on the floe were relatively stable, Perovich took measurements with his spectroradiometer once a week, and during June, July, and August, when they were changing more rapidly, he took measurements every other day. The arrangement allowed him to plot exactly how the albedo varied as the snow on top of the ice turned to slush, and then the slush became puddles, and, finally, some of the puddles melted through to the water below.

An ideal white surface, which reflected all the light that shone on it, would have an albedo of one, and an ideal black surface, which absorbed all the light, would have an albedo of zero. The albedo of the earth, in aggregate, is 0.3, meaning that a little less than a third of the sunlight that hits it gets reflected back out. Anything that changes the earth's albedo changes how much energy the planet absorbs, with potentially dramatic consequences. "I like it because it deals with simple concepts, but it's important," Perovich told me.

At one point, Perovich asked me to imagine that we were looking down at the earth from a spaceship above the North Pole. "It's springtime, and the ice is covered with snow, and it's really bright and white," he said. "It reflects over eighty per cent of the incident sunlight. The albedo's around 0.8, 0.9. Now, let's suppose that we melt that ice away and we're left with the ocean. The albedo of the ocean is less than 0.1; it's like 0.07.

"Not only is the albedo of the snow-covered ice high; it's the highest of anything we find on earth," he went on. "And not only is the albedo of water low; it's pretty much as low as anything you can find on earth. So what you're doing is you're replacing the best reflector with the worst reflector." The more open water that's exposed, the more solar energy goes into heating the ocean. The result is a positive feedback, similar to the one between thawing permafrost and carbon releases, only more direct. This so-called ice-albedo feedback is believed to be a major reason that the Arctic is warming so rapidly.

"As we melt that ice back, we can put more heat into the system, which means we can melt the ice back even more, which means we can put more heat into it, and, you see, it just kind of builds on itself," Perovich said. "It takes a small nudge to the climate system and amplifies it into a big change."

A few dozen miles to the east of CRREL, not far from the Maine-New Hampshire border, is a small park called the Madison Boulder Natural Area. The park's major—indeed, only—attraction is a block of granite the size of a two-story house. The Madison Boulder is thirty-seven feet wide and eighty-three feet long and weighs about ten million pounds. It was plucked out of the White Mountains and deposited in its current location eleven thousand years ago, and it illustrates how relatively minor changes to the climate system have, when amplified, yielded cataclysmic results.

Geologically speaking, we are now living in a warm period after an ice age. Over the past two million years, huge ice sheets have advanced across the Northern Hemisphere and retreated again more than twenty times. (Each major glaciation tended, for obvious reasons, to destroy the evidence of its predecessors.) The most recent advance, called the Wisconsin, began roughly a hundred and twenty thousand years ago, when ice began to creep outward from centers in Scandinavia, Siberia, and the highlands near Hudson Bay. By the time the sheets had reached their maximum southern extent, most of New England and New York and a good part of the upper Midwest were buried under ice nearly a mile thick. The ice sheets were so heavy that they depressed the crust of the earth, pushing it down into the mantle. (In some places, the process of recovery, known as isostatic rebound, is still going on.) As the ice retreated, it deposited, among other landmarks, the terminal moraine called Long Island.

It is now known, or at least almost universally accepted, that glacial cycles are initiated by slight, periodic variations in the earth's orbit. These orbital variations alter the distribution of sunlight at different latitudes during different seasons according to a complex pattern that takes a hundred thousand years to complete. But orbital variations in themselves aren't nearly sufficient to produce the sort of massive ice sheet that moved the Madison Boulder.

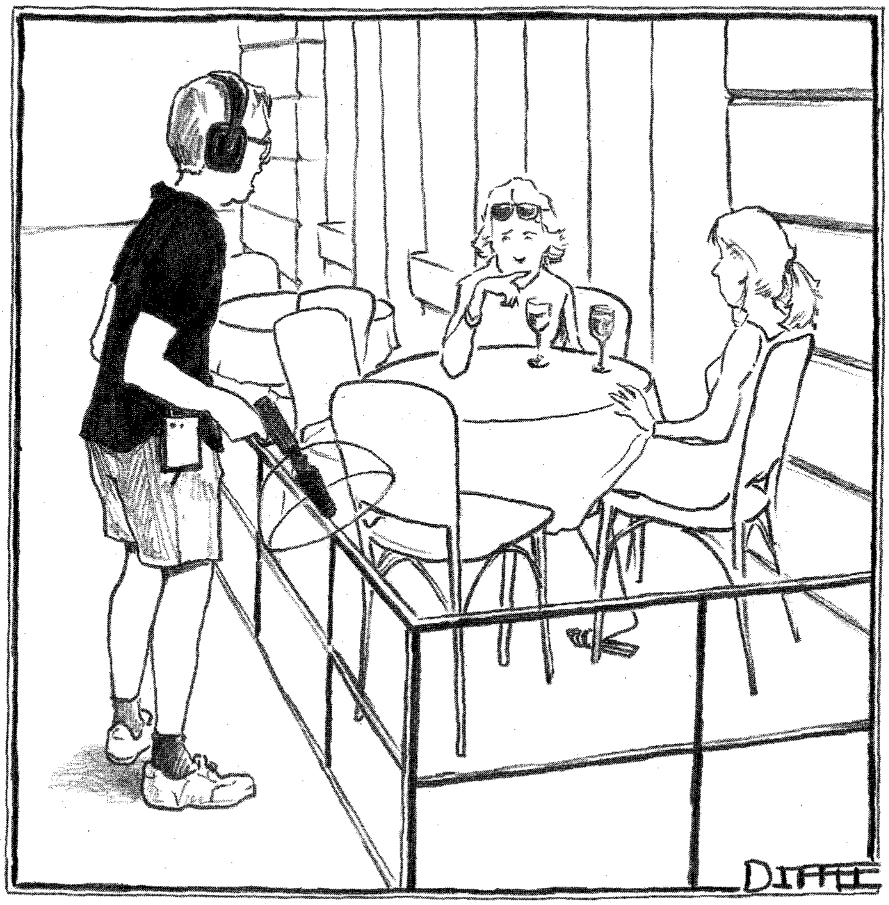
The crushing size of that ice sheet, the Laurentide, which stretched over some five million square miles, was the result of feedbacks, more or less analogous to those now being studied in the Arctic, only operating in reverse. As ice built up, albedo increased, leading to less heat absorption and the growth of yet more ice. At the same time, for reasons that are not entirely understood, as the ice sheets advanced CO_2 levels declined: during each of the most recent glaciations, carbon-dioxide levels dropped almost precisely in synch with falling temperatures. During each warm period, when the ice retreated, CO_2 levels rose again. Ice cores from Antarctica contain a record of the atmosphere stretching back more than four glacial cycles—minute samples of air get trapped in tiny bubbles—and researchers who have studied these cores have concluded that fully half the temperature difference between cold periods and warm ones can be attributed to changes in the concentrations of greenhouse gases. Antarctic ice cores also show that carbon-dioxide levels today are significantly higher than they have been at any other point in the last four hundred and twenty thousand years.

While I was at CRREL, Perovich took me to meet a colleague of his named John Weatherly. Posted on Weatherly's office door was a bumper sticker designed to be pasted—illicitly—on S.U.V.s. It said, "I'm Changing the Climate! Ask Me How!" For the last several years, Weatherly and Perovich have been working to translate the data gathered on the Des Groseilliers expedition into computer algorithms to be used in climate forecasting. Weatherly told me that some climate models—worldwide, there are about fifteen major ones in operation—predict that the perennial sea-ice cover in the Arctic will disappear entirely by the year 2080. At that point, although there would continue to be seasonal ice that forms in winter, in summer the Arctic Ocean would be completely ice-free. "That's not in our lifetime," he observed. "But it is in the lifetime of our kids."

Later, back in his office, Perovich and I talked about the long-term prospects for the Arctic. Perovich noted that the earth's climate system is so vast that it is not easily altered. "On the one hand, you think, It's the earth's climate system, it's big; it's robust. And, indeed, it has to be somewhat robust or else it would be changing all the time." On the other hand, the climate record shows that it would be a mistake to assume that change, when it comes, will come slowly. Perovich offered a comparison that he had heard from a glaciologist friend. The friend likened the climate system to a rowboat: "You can tip and then you'll just go back. You can tip it and just go back. And then you tip it and you get to the other stable state, which is upside down."

Perovich said that he also liked a regional analogy. "The way I've been thinking about it, riding my bike around here, is, You ride by all these pastures and they've got these big granite boulders in the middle of them. You've got a big boulder sitting there on this rolling hill. You can't just go by this boulder. You've got to try to push it. So you start rocking it, and you get a bunch of friends, and they start rocking it, and finally it starts moving. And then you realize, Maybe this wasn't the best idea. That's what we're doing as a society. This climate, if it starts rolling, we don't really know where it will stop."

As a cause for alarm, global warming could be said to be a nineteen-seventies idea; as pure science, however, it is much older than that. In 1859, a British physicist named John Tyndall, experimenting with a machine he had built—the world's first ratio spectrophotometer—set out to study the heat-trapping properties of various gases. Tyndall found that the most common elements in the air—oxygen and nitrogen—were transparent to both visible and infrared radiation. Gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and water vapor, by contrast, were not. Tyndall was quick to appreciate the implications of his discovery: the imperfectly transparent gases, he declared, were largely responsible for determining the earth's climate. He likened their impact to that of a dam built across a river: just as a dam "causes a local deepening of the stream, so our atmosphere, thrown as a barrier across the terrestrial rays, produces a local



"Pardon me, but I couldn't help overhearing your conversation."

"I'm sorry, Eddie, but the old man wants me to kill you."

heightening of the temperature at the earth's surface."

The phenomenon that Tyndall identified is now referred to as the "natural greenhouse effect." It is not remotely controversial; indeed, it's an essential condition of life on earth as we know it. To understand how it works, it helps to imagine the planet without it. In that situation, the earth would constantly be receiving energy from the sun and, at the same time, constantly radiating energy back out to space. All hot bodies radiate, and the amount that they radiate is a function of their temperature. In order for the earth to be in equilibrium, the quantity of energy it sends into space must equal the quantity it is receiving. When, for whatever reason, equilibrium is disturbed, the planet will either warm up or cool down until the temperature is once again sufficient to make the two energy streams balance out.

If there were no greenhouse gases, energy radiating from the surface of the earth would flow away from it unimpeded. In that case, it would be comparatively easy to calculate how warm the planet would have to get to throw back into space the same amount of energy it absorbs from the sun. (This amount varies widely by location and time of year; averaged out, it comes to some two hundred and thirty-five watts per square metre, or roughly the energy of four household light bulbs.) The result of this calculation is a frigid zero degrees. To use Tyndall's Victorian language, if the heat-trapping gases were removed from the air for a single night "the warmth of our fields and gardens would pour itself unrequited into space, and the sun would rise upon an island held fast in the iron grip of frost."

Greenhouse gases alter the situation because of their peculiar absorptive properties. The sun's radiation arrives mostly in the form of visible light, which greenhouse gases allow to pass freely. The earth's radiation, meanwhile, is emitted mostly in the infrared part of the spectrum. Greenhouse gases absorb infrared radiation and then reëmit it—some out toward space and some back toward earth. This process of absorption and reëmission has the effect of limiting the outward flow of energy; as a result, the earth's surface and lower atmosphere have to be that much warmer before the planet can radiate out the necessary two hundred and thirty-five watts per square metre. The presence of greenhouse gases is what largely accounts for the fact that the average global temperature, instead of zero, is actually a far more comfortable fifty-seven degrees.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Tyndall's work on the natural greenhouse effect had been extended to what would today be called the "enhanced greenhouse effect." In 1894, the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius became convinced that humans were altering the earth's energy balance. Much as Tyndall had tried to imagine what the world would be like in the absence of greenhouse gases, Arrhenius tried to imagine what it would be like in the presence of more of them. Starting on Christmas Eve, he set out to calculate what would happen to the earth's temperature if CO_2 levels were doubled. Arrhenius described the calculations as some of the most tedious of his life. He routinely worked on them for fourteen hours a day, and was not finished for nearly a year. Finally, in December, 1895, he announced his results to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Like the natural greenhouse effect, the enhanced greenhouse effect is—in theoretical terms, at least—uncontroversial. If greenhouse-gas levels in the atmosphere increase, all other things being equal, the earth's temperature will rise. The key uncertainties concern how this process will play out in practice, since in the real world all things rarely are equal. For several decades after Arrhenius completed his calculations, scientists were unsure to what extent mankind was even capable of affecting atmospheric carbon-dioxide levels; the general assumption was that the oceans would absorb just about everything humans could emit. Arrhenius himself predicted that it would take three thousand years of coal burning to double the CO_2 in the air, a prediction, it is now known, that was off by roughly twenty-eight centuries.

Swiss Camp is a research station set up in 1990 on a platform drilled into the Greenland ice sheet. Because the ice sheet is moving—ice flows like water, only more slowly—the camp is always in motion: in fifteen years, it has migrated by more than a mile, generally in a westerly direction. Every summer, the whole place gets flooded, and every winter its contents solidify. The cumulative effect of all this is that almost nothing at Swiss Camp functions anymore the way it was supposed to. To get into it, you have to clamber up a snowdrift and descend through a trapdoor in the roof, as if entering a ship's hold or a space module. The living quarters are no longer habitable, so now the scientists at the camp sleep outside, in tents. (The one assigned to me was the same sort used by Robert Scott on his ill-fated expedition to the South Pole.) By the time I arrived at the camp, late last

May, someone had jackhammered out the center of the workspace but had left the desks encased in three-foot-high blocks of ice. Inside them I could dimly make out a tangle of wires, a bulging plastic bag, and an old dustpan.

Konrad Steffen, a professor of geography at the University of Colorado, is the director of Swiss Camp. A native of Zurich, Steffen is tall and lanky, with pale-blue eyes, blondish hair, and a blondish-gray beard. He fell in love with the Arctic when, as a graduate student in 1975, he spent a summer on Axel Heiberg Island, four hundred miles northwest of the north magnetic pole. A few years later, for his doctoral dissertation, he lived for two winters on the sea ice off Baffin Island. (Steffen told me that for his honeymoon he had wanted to take his wife to Spitsbergen, an island five hundred miles north of Norway, but she demurred, and they had ended up driving across the Sahara instead.)

When Steffen planned Swiss Camp—he built much of the place himself—it was not with global warming in mind. Rather, he was interested in meteorological conditions on what is known as the ice sheet's "equilibrium line." Along this line, winter snow and summer melt are supposed to be precisely in balance. But, in recent years, "equilibrium" has become an increasingly elusive quality. In the summer of 2002, the ice sheet melted to an unprecedented extent. Satellite images taken by NASA showed that snow had melted up to an elevation of sixty-five hundred feet. In some of these spots, ice-core records revealed, liquid water had not been seen for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. The following winter, there was an unusually low snowfall, and in the summer of 2003 the melt was so great that, around Swiss Camp, five feet of ice were lost.

When I arrived at the camp, the 2004 melt season was already under way. This, to Steffen, was a matter of both intense scientific interest and serious practical concern. A few days earlier, one of his graduate students, Russell Huff, and a postdoc, Nicolas Cullen, had driven out on snowmobiles to service some weather stations closer to the coast. The snow there was melting so fast that they had had to work until five in the morning, and then take a long detour back, to avoid getting caught in the quickly forming rivers. Steffen wanted to get everything that needed to be done completed ahead of schedule, in case everyone had to pack up and leave early. My first day at Swiss Camp he spent fixing an antenna that had fallen over in the previous year's melt. It was bristling with equipment, like a high-tech Christmas tree. Even on a relatively warm day on the ice sheet, which this was, it never gets more than a few degrees above freezing, and I was walking around in a huge parka, two pairs of pants plus long underwear, and two pairs of gloves. Steffen, meanwhile, was tinkering with the antenna with his bare hands. He has spent fourteen summers at Swiss Camp, and I asked him what he had learned during that time. He answered with another question.

"Are we disintegrating part of the Greenland ice sheet over the longer term?" he asked. He was sorting through a tangle of wires that to me all looked the same but must have had some sort of distinguishing characteristics. "What the regional models tell us is that we will get more melt at the coast. It will continue to melt. But warmer air can hold more water vapor, and at the top of the ice sheet you'll get more precipitation. So we'll add more snow there. We'll get an imbalance of having more accumulation at the top, and more melt at the bottom. The key question now is: What is the dominant one, the more melt or the increase?"

Greenland's ice sheet is the second-largest on earth. (Antarctica's is the largest.) In its present form, the Greenland ice sheet is, quite literally, a relic of the last glaciation. The top layers consist of snow that fell recently. Beneath these layers is snow that fell centuries and then millennia ago, until, at the very bottom, there is snow that fell a hundred and thirty thousand years ago. Under current climate conditions, the ice sheet probably would not form, and it is only its enormous size that has sustained it for this long. In the middle of the island, the ice is so thick—nearly two miles—that it creates a kind of perpetual winter. Snow falls in central Greenland year-round and it never melts, although, over time, the snow gets compacted into ice and is pressed out toward the coast. There, eventually, it either calves off into icebergs or flows away. In summertime, lakes of a spectacular iridescent blue form at the ice sheet's lower elevations; these empty into vast rivers that fan out toward the sea. Near Swiss Camp—elevation 3,770 feet—there is a huge depression where one such lake forms each July, but by that point no one is around to see it: it would be far too dangerous.

Much of what is known about the earth's climate over the last hundred thousand years comes from ice cores drilled in central Greenland, along a line known as the ice divide. Owing to differences between summer and winter snow, each layer in a Greenland core can be individually dated, much like the rings of a tree. Then, by analyzing the isotopic composition of the ice, it is possible to determine how cold it was at the time each layer was formed. (Although ice cores from Antarctica contain a much longer climate record, it is not as detailed.) Over the last decade, three Greenland cores have been drilled to a depth of ten thousand feet, and these cores have prompted a rethinking of how the climate operates. Where once the system was thought to change, as it were, only glacially, now it is known to be capable of sudden and unpredictable reversals. One such reversal, called the Younger Dryas, after a small Arctic plant—*Dryas octopetala*—that suddenly reappeared in Scandinavia, took place roughly twelve thousand eight hundred years ago. At that point, the earth, which had been warming rapidly, was plunged back into glacial conditions. It remained frigid for twelve centuries and then warmed again, even more abruptly. In Greenland, average annual temperatures shot up by nearly twenty degrees in a single decade.

As a continuous temperature record, the Greenland ice cores stop providing reliable information right around the start of the last glacial cycle. Climate records pieced together from other sources indicate that the last interglacial, which is known as the Eemian, was somewhat warmer than the present one, the Holocene. They also show that sea levels during that time were at least fifteen feet higher than they are today. One theory attributes this to a collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. A second holds that meltwater from Greenland was responsible. (When sea ice melts, it does not affect sea level, because the ice, which was floating, was already displacing an equivalent volume of water.) All told, the Greenland ice sheet holds enough water to raise sea levels worldwide by twenty-three feet. Scientists at NASA have calculated that throughout the nineteen-nineties the ice sheet, despite some thickening at the center, was shrinking by twelve cubic miles per year.

Jay Zwally is a NASA scientist who works on a satellite project known as ICESat. He is also a friend of Steffen's, and about ten years ago he got the idea of installing global-positioning-system receivers around Swiss Camp to study changes in the ice sheet's elevation. Zwally happened to be at the camp while I was there, and the second day of my visit we all got onto snowmobiles and headed out to a location known as JAR 1 (for Jakobshavn Ablation Region) to reinstall a G.P.S. receiver. The trip was about ten miles. Midway through it, Zwally told me that he had once seen spy-satellite photos of the region we were crossing, and that they had shown that underneath the snow it was full of crevasses. Later, when I asked Steffen about this, he told me that he had had the whole area surveyed with bottom-seeking radar, and no crevasses of any note had been found. I was never sure which one of them to believe.

Reinstalling Zwally's G.P.S. receiver entailed putting up a series of poles, a process that, in turn, required drilling holes thirty feet down into the ice. The drilling was done not mechanically but thermally, using a steam drill that consisted of a propane burner, a steel tank to hold snow, and a long rubber hose. Everyone—Steffen, Zwally, the graduate students, me—took a turn. This meant holding onto the hose while it melted its way down, an activity reminiscent of ice fishing. Seventy-five years ago, not far from JAR 1, Alfred Wegener, the German scientist who proposed the theory of continental drift, died while on a meteorological expedition. He was buried in the ice sheet, and there is a running joke at Swiss Camp about stumbling onto his body. "It's Wegener!" one of the graduate students exclaimed, as the drill worked its way downward. The first hole was finished relatively quickly, at which point everyone decided—prematurely, as it turned out—that it was time for a midday snack. Unless a hole stays filled with water, it starts to close up again, and can't be used. Apparently, there were fissures in the ice, because water kept draining out of the next few holes that were tried. The original plan had been for three holes, but, some six hours later, only two had been drilled, and it was decided that this would have to suffice.

Although Zwally had set out to look for changes in the ice sheet's elevation, what he ended up measuring was, potentially, even more significant. His G.P.S. data showed that the more the ice sheet melted the faster it started to move. Thus in the summer of 1996, the ice around Swiss Camp moved at a rate of thirteen inches per day, but in 2001 it had sped up to twenty inches per day. The reason for this acceleration, it is believed, is that meltwater from the surface makes its way down to the bedrock below, where it acts as a lubricant. (In the process, it enlarges cracks and forms huge ice tunnels, known as moulins.) Zwally's measurements also showed that, in the summer, the ice sheet rises by about six inches, indicating that it is floating on a cushion of water.

At the end of the last glaciation, the ice sheets that covered much of the Northern Hemisphere disappeared in a matter of a few thousand years—a surprisingly short time, considering how long it had taken them to build up. At one point, about fourteen thousand years ago, they were melting so fast that sea levels were rising at the rate of more than a foot a decade. Just how this happened is not entirely understood, but the acceleration of the Greenland ice sheet suggests yet another feedback mechanism: once an ice sheet begins to melt, it starts to flow faster, which means it also thins out faster, encouraging further melt. Not far from Swiss Camp, there is a huge river of ice known as the Jakobshavn Isbrae, which probably was the source of the iceberg that sank the Titanic. In 1992, the Jakobshavn Isbrae flowed at a rate of three and a half miles per hour; by 2003, its velocity had increased to 7.8 miles per hour. Similar findings were announced earlier this year by scientists measuring the flow of ice streams on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Over the last century, global sea levels have risen by about half a foot. The most recent report of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, issued in 2001, predicts that they will rise anywhere from four inches to three feet by the year 2100. This prediction includes almost no contribution from Greenland or Antarctica; it is based mostly on the physics of water, which, as it warms up, expands. Two climatologists at Pennsylvania State University, Richard Alley and Byron Parizek, recently issued new predictions that take into account the observed acceleration of the ice sheets; this effect in Greenland alone, they estimate, will cause up to two and half inches of additional sea-level rise over the coming century. James Hansen, the NASA official who directed one of the initial nineteen-seventies studies on the effects of carbon dioxide, has gone much further, arguing that if greenhouse-gas emissions are not controlled the total disintegration of the Greenland ice sheet could be set in motion in a matter of decades. Although the process would take hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years to fully play out, once begun it would become self-reinforcing, and hence virtually impossible to stop. In an article published earlier last year in the journal *Climatic Change*, Hansen, who is now the head of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, wrote that he hoped he was wrong about the ice sheet, "but I doubt it."

As it happened, I was at Swiss Camp just as last summer's global-warming disaster movie, "The Day After Tomorrow," was opening in theatres. One night, Steffen's wife called on the camp's satellite phone to say that she had just taken the couple's two teen-age children to see it. Everyone had enjoyed the film, she reported, especially because of the family connection.

The fantastic conceit of "The Day After Tomorrow" is that global warming produces global freezing. At the start of the film, a chunk of Antarctic ice the size of Rhode Island suddenly melts. (Something very similar to this actually happened in March, 2002, when the Larsen B ice shelf collapsed.) Most of what follows—an instant ice age, cyclonic winds that descend from the upper atmosphere—is impossible as science but not as metaphor. The record preserved in the Greenland ice sheet shows that over the last hundred thousand years temperatures have often swung wildly—so often that it is our own relatively static experience of climate that has come to look exceptional.

Nobody knows what caused the sudden climate shifts of the past; however, many climatologists suspect that they had something to do with changes in ocean-current patterns that are known as the thermohaline circulation.

"When you freeze sea ice, the salt is pushed out of the pores, so that the salty water actually drains," Steffen explained to me one day when we were standing out on the ice, trying to talk above the howl of the wind. "And salty water's actually heavier, so it starts to sink." Meanwhile, owing both to evaporation and to heat loss, water from the tropics becomes denser as it drifts toward the Arctic, so that near Greenland a tremendous volume of seawater is constantly sinking toward the ocean floor. As a result of this process, still more warm water is drawn from the tropics toward the poles, setting up what is often referred to as a "conveyor belt" that moves heat around the globe.

"This is the energy engine for the world climate," Steffen went on. "And it has one source: the water that sinks down. And if you just turn the knob here a little bit"—he made a motion of turning the water on in a bathtub—"we can expect significant temperature changes based on the redistribution of energy." One way to turn the knob is to heat the oceans, which is already happening. Another is to pour more freshwater into the polar seas. This is also occurring. Not only is runoff from coastal Greenland increasing; the volume of river discharge into the Arctic Ocean has been rising. Oceanographers monitoring the North Atlantic have documented that in recent decades its waters have become significantly less salty. A total shutdown of the thermohaline circulation is considered extremely unlikely in the coming century. But, if the Greenland ice sheet started to disintegrate, the possibility of such a shutdown could not be ruled out. Wallace Broecker, a professor of geochemistry at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, has labelled the thermohaline circulation the "Achilles' heel of the climate system." Were it to halt, places like Britain, whose climate is heavily influenced by the Gulf Stream, could become much colder, even as the planet as a whole continued to warm up.

For the whole time I was at Swiss Camp, it was "polar day," and so the sun never set. Dinner was generally served at 10 or 11 P.M., and afterward everyone sat around a makeshift table in the kitchen, talking and drinking coffee. (Because it is not—strictly speaking—necessary, alcohol was in short supply.) One night, I asked Steffen what he thought conditions at Swiss Camp would be like in the same season a decade hence. "In ten years, the signal should be much more distinct, because we will have added another ten years of greenhouse warming," he said.

Zwally interjected, "I predict that ten years from now we won't be coming this time of year. We won't be able to come this late. To put it nicely, we are heading into deep doo-doo."

Either by disposition or by training, Steffen was reluctant to make specific predictions, whether about Greenland or, more generally, about the Arctic. Often, he prefaced his remarks by noting that there could be a change in atmospheric-circulation patterns that would dampen the rate of temperature increase or even—temporarily at least—reverse it entirely. But he was emphatic that "climate change is a real thing.

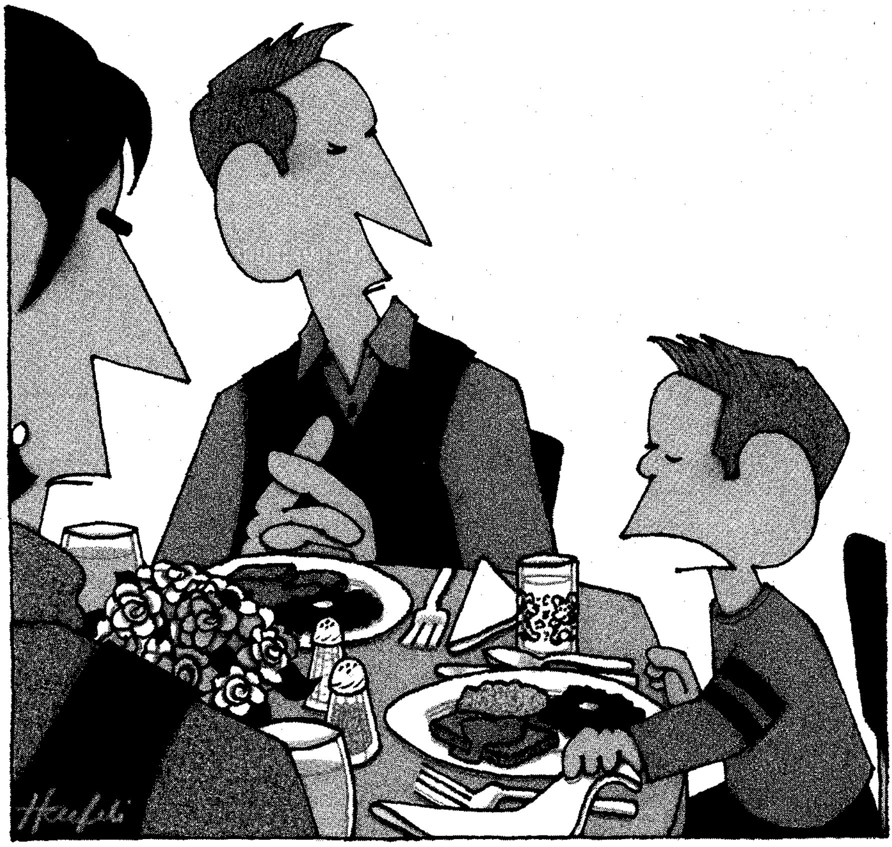
"It's not something dramatic now—that's why people don't really react," he told me. "But if you can convey the message that it will be dramatic for our children and our children's children—the risk is too big not to care."

The time, he added, "is already five past midnight."

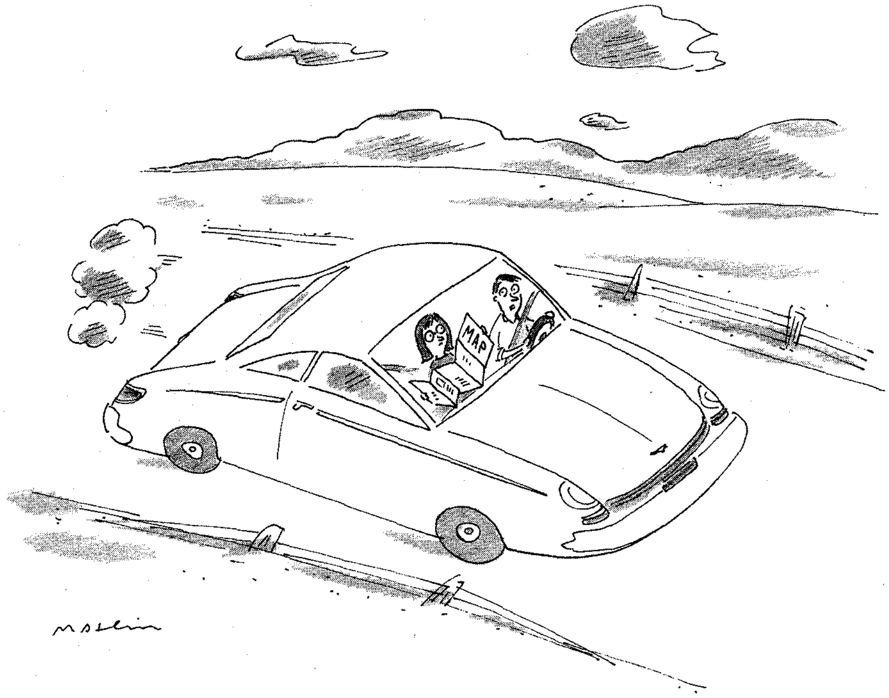
On the last night that I spent at Swiss Camp, Steffen took the data he had downloaded off his weather station and, after running them through various programs on his laptop, produced the mean temperature at the camp for the previous year. It was the highest of any year since the camp was built.

That night, dinner was unusually late. On the return trip of another pole-drilling expedition, one of the snowmobiles had caught on fire, and had to be towed back to camp. When I finally went out to my tent to go to bed, I found that the snow underneath it had started to melt, and there was a large puddle in the middle of the floor. I got some paper towels and tried to mop it up, but the puddle was too big, and eventually I gave up.

No nation takes a keener interest in climate change, at least on a per-capita basis, than Iceland. More than ten per cent of the country is covered by glaciers, the largest of which, Vatnajökull,



"I'm old enough to recognize a lecture disguised as grace."



"How many miles before our next fight?"

• •

stretches over thirty-two hundred square miles. During the so-called Little Ice Age, the advance of the glaciers caused widespread misery; it has been estimated that in the mid-eighteenth century nearly a third of the country's population died of starvation or associated ills. For Icelanders, many of whom can trace their genealogy back a thousand years, this is considered to be almost recent history.

Oddur Sigurdsson heads up a group called the Icelandic Glaciological Society. One day last fall, I went to visit him in his office, at the headquarters of Iceland's National Energy Authority, in Reykjavík. Little towheaded children kept wandering in to peer under his desk. Sigurdsson explained that Reykjavík's public schoolteachers were on strike, and his colleagues had had to bring their children to work.

The Icelandic Glaciological Society is composed entirely of volunteers. Every fall, after the summer-melt season has ended, they survey the size of the country's three hundred-odd glaciers and then file reports, which Sigurdsson collects in brightly colored binders. In the organization's early years—it was founded in 1930—the volunteers were mostly farmers; they took measurements by building cairns and pacing off the distance to the glacier's edge. These days, members come from all walks of life—one is a retired plastic surgeon—and they take more exacting surveys, using tape measures and iron poles. Some glaciers have been in the same family, so to speak, for generations. Sigurdsson became head of the society in 1987, at which point one volunteer told him that he thought he would like to relinquish his post.

"He was about ninety when I realized how old he was," Sigurdsson recalled. "His father had done this at that place before and then his nephew took over for him." Another volunteer has been monitoring his glacier, a section of Vatnajökull, since 1948. "He's eighty," Sigurdsson said. "And if I have some questions that go beyond his age I just go and ask his mother. She's a hundred and seven."

In contrast to glaciers in North America, which have been shrinking steadily since the nineteen-sixties, Iceland's glaciers grew through the nineteen-seventies and eighties. Then, in the mid-nineteen-nineties, they, too, began to decline, at first slowly and then much more rapidly. Sigurdsson pulled out a notebook of glaciological reports, filled out on yellow forms, and turned to the section on a glacier called Sólheimajökull, a tongue-shaped spit of ice that sticks out from a much larger glacier, called Mýrdalsjökull. In 1996, Sólheimajökull crept back by ten feet. In 1997, it receded by another thirty-three feet, and in 1998 by ninety-eight feet. Every year since then, it has retreated even more. In 2003, it shrank by three hundred and two feet and in 2004 by two hundred and eighty-five feet. All told, Sólheimajökull—the name means "sun-home glacier" and refers to a nearby farm—is now eleven hundred feet shorter than it was just a decade ago. Sigurdsson pulled out another notebook, which was filled with slides. He picked out some recent ones of Sólheimajökull. The glacier ended in a wide river. An enormous rock, which Sólheimajökull had deposited when it began its retreat, stuck out from the water, like the hull of an abandoned ship.

"You can tell by this glacier what the climate is doing," Sigurdsson said. "It is more sensitive than the most sensitive meteorological measurement." He introduced me to a colleague of his, Kristjana Eythórsdóttir, who, as it turned out, was the granddaughter of the founder of the Icelandic Glaciological Society. Eythórsdóttir keeps tabs on a glacier named Leidarjökull, which is a four-hour trek from the nearest road. I asked her how it was doing. "Oh, it's getting smaller and smaller, just like all the others," she said. Sigurdsson told me that climate models predicted that by the end of the next century Iceland would be virtually ice-free. "We will have small ice caps on the highest mountains, but the mass of the glaciers will have gone," he said. It is believed that there have been glaciers on Iceland for the last few million years. "Probably longer," Sigurdsson said.

In October, 2000, in a middle school in Barrow, Alaska, officials from the eight Arctic nations—the U.S., Russia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland—met to talk about global warming. The group announced plans for a three-part, two-million-dollar study of climate change in the region. This past fall, the first two parts of the study—a massive technical document and a hundred-and-forty-page summary—were presented at a symposium in Reykjavík.

The day after I went to talk to Sigurdsson, I attended the symposium's plenary session. In addition to nearly three hundred scientists, it drew a sizable contingent of native Arctic residents—reindeer herders, subsistence hunters, and representatives of groups like the Inuvialuit Game Council. In among the shirts and ties, I spotted two men dressed in the brightly colored tunics of the Sami and several others wearing sealskin vests. As the session went on, the subject kept changing—from hydrology and biodiversity to fisheries and on to forests. The message, however, stayed the same. Almost wherever you looked, temperatures in the Arctic were rising, and at a rate that surprised even those who had expected to find clear signs of climate change. Robert Corell, an American oceanographer and a former assistant director at the National Science Foundation, coördinated the study. In his opening remarks, he ran through its findings—shrinking sea ice, receding glaciers, thawing permafrost—and summed them up as follows: "The Arctic climate is warming rapidly now, with an emphasis on now." Particularly alarming, Corell said, were the most recent data from Greenland, which showed the ice sheet melting much faster "than we thought possible even a decade ago."

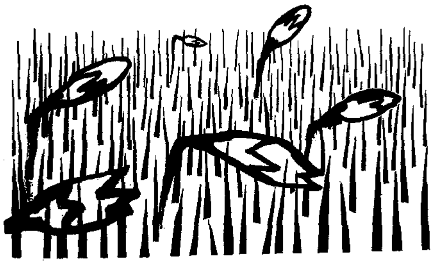
Global warming is routinely described as a matter of scientific debate—a theory whose validity has yet to be demonstrated. This characterization, or at least a variant of it, is offered most significantly by the Bush Administration, which maintains that there is still insufficient scientific understanding to justify mandatory action. The symposium's opening session lasted for more than nine hours. During that time, many speakers stressed the uncertainties that remain about global warming and its effects—on the thermohaline circulation, on the distribution of vegetation, on the survival of cold-loving species, on the frequency of forest fires. But this sort of questioning, which is so basic to scientific discourse, never extended to the relationship between carbon dioxide and rising temperatures. The study's executive summary stated, unequivocally, that human beings had become the "dominant factor" influencing the climate. During an afternoon coffee break, I caught up with Corell. "Let's say that there's three hundred people in this room," he told me. "I don't think you'll find five who would say that global warming is just a natural process."

The third part of the Arctic-climate study, which was still unfinished at the time of the symposium, was the so-called "policy document." This was supposed to outline practical steps to be taken in response to the scientific findings, including—presumably—reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. The policy document remained unfinished because American negotiators had rejected much of the language proposed by the seven other Arctic nations. (A few weeks later, the U.S. agreed to a vaguely worded statement calling for "effective"—but not obligatory—actions to combat the problem.) This recalcitrance left those Americans who had travelled to Reykjavík in an awkward position. A few tried—half-heartedly—to defend the Administration's stand to me; most, including many government employees, were critical of it. At one point, Corell observed that the loss of sea ice since the late nineteen-seventies was equal to "the size of Texas and Arizona combined. That analogy was made for obvious reasons."

That evening, at the hotel bar, I talked to an Inuit hunter named John Keogak, who lives on Banks Island, in Canada's Northwest Territories, some five hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle. He told me that he and his fellow-hunters had started to notice that the climate was changing in the mid-eighties. A few years ago, for the first time, people began to see robins, a bird for which the Inuit in his region have no word.

"We just thought, Oh, gee, it's warming up a little bit," he recalled. "It was good at the start—warmer winters, you know—but now everything is going so fast. The things that we saw coming in the early nineties, they've just multiplied.

"Of the people involved in global warming, I think we're on top of the list of who would be most affected," Keogak went on. "Our way of life, our traditions, maybe our families. Our children may not have a future. I mean, all young people, put it that way. It's just not happening in the Arctic. It's going to happen all over the world. The whole world is going too fast."



The symposium in Reykjavík lasted for four days. One morning, when the presentations on the agenda included "Char as a Model for Assessing Climate Change Impacts on Arctic Fishery Resources," I decided to rent a car and take a drive. In recent years, Reykjavík has been expanding almost on a daily basis, and the old port city is now surrounded by rings of identical, European-looking suburbs. Ten minutes from the car-rental place, these began to give out, and I found myself in a desolate landscape in which there were no trees or bushes or really even soil. The ground—fields of lava from some defunct, or perhaps just dormant, volcanoes—resembled macadam that had recently been bulldozed. I stopped to get a cup of coffee in the town of Hveragerdi, where roses are raised in greenhouses heated with steam that pours directly out of the earth. Farther on, I crossed into farm country; the landscape was still treeless, but now there was grass, and sheep eating it. Finally, I reached the sign for Sólheimajökull, the glacier whose retreat Oddur Sigurdsson had described to me. I turned off onto a dirt road. It ran alongside a brown river, between two crazily shaped ridges. After a few miles, the road ended, and the only option was to continue on foot.

By the time I got to the lookout over Sólheimajökull, it was raining. In the gloomy light, the glacier looked forlorn. Much of it was gray—covered in a film of dark grit. In its retreat, it had left behind ridged piles of silt. These were jet black and barren—not even the tough local grasses had had a chance to take root on them. I looked for the enormous boulder I had seen in the photos in Sigurdsson's office. It was such a long way from the edge of the glacier that for a moment I wondered if perhaps it had been carried along by the current. A raw wind came up, and I started to head down. Then I thought about what Sigurdsson had told me. If I returned in another decade, the glacier would probably no longer even be visible from the ridge where I was standing. I climbed back up to take a second look. ♦

(This is the first part of a three-part article.)

REFLECTIONS

"I GOT A SCHEME!"

The words of Saul Bellow.

On a summer afternoon in 1998, while I was visiting Saul Bellow and his wife, Janis, in their rural Vermont home, I proposed to Saul that he and I do an extensive written interview about his life's work. We had been talking for hours on the deck at the rear of the house, along with other friends who'd driven to Vermont to see the Bellows—the Romanian writer Norman Manea and his wife, Cella, who is an art restorer, and the writer and teacher Ross Miller. The four of us tried to get up to Vermont for three or four days every summer because Saul demonstrably enjoyed our visits, and we had a good time together staying at a nearby inn. The conversation was sharp and excited, lots of lucid talk directed mostly at Saul—whose curiosity was all-embracing and for whom listening was a serious matter—and much hilarity about the wonders of human mischief, particularly as we evoked them around the dinner table at the Bellows' favorite local restaurant, where Saul would throw back his head and laugh like a man blissfully delighted with everything. The older Saul got—and in '98 he was eighty-three and growing frail—the more our annual pilgrimage resembled an act of religious devotion.

Once I was home, I phoned Saul to suggest how we might proceed with the interview, if he was still interested in my idea. I would reread the books (some, like "The Adventures of Augie March" and "Herzog," for the third or fourth time), then send him my thoughts on each, structured as questions, for him to respond to at length however he liked. As it turned out, we never got much beyond a beginning, despite Saul's willingness and my prodding. Every few months, in response to a letter or a phone call from me, some pages would arrive in the mail or through the fax machine, but then months would pass without a word from him, and, despite a weeklong visit I made to his Boston home one December, when he and I sat together for several hours every day talking about the books in the hope of stimulating his memory and his interest, the project petered out, and, reluctantly, I let him be. In time, I enlarged my "thoughts" into an essay on his work, and filed away the pages that Saul had sent sporadically in the course of the two and a half years that I'd tried to keep the interview alive.

Only recently have I taken the pages out to reread. They appear here as he wrote them, without any editorial correction or alteration—his sentences like his memories left to stand as they are—and with bracketed material added by me only for the sake of clarity. They focus on the early books "Augie March," "Seize the Day," and "Henderson the Rain King," published between 1953 and 1959. We got no further than that. Most of the pieces are about "Augie" or are recollections—of Saul's Chicago childhood or of Paris in 1948, where the book was begun—motivated by his thinking about "Augie"; sometimes it appears that he has forgotten having already answered my questions about "Augie," and zestfully, with great precision, begins to develop a new line of thought that repeats details and incorporates motifs from a previous response. The pages about "Seize the Day" arrived in May of 2000 and those on "Henderson the Rain King" several months later, and that was the end of it.

It's too bad that I couldn't get him to go on to "Herzog," "Mr. Sammler's Planet," "Humboldt's Gift," and "The Dean's December," as I planned to do, but he just wasn't interested enough in contemplating his own achievement anymore. Also, he was writing "Ravelstein" at the time, and the energy and concentration weren't there for this sort of retrospective pursuit. It's too bad, because what he wrote about the fifties books constitutes a singularly Bellowesque mix of mind and memory, the opening of an aged writer's autobiography, unplanned, extemporized, and yet comparable in its vividness and evocative charm to Hemingway's farewell to the world, the posthumously published memoir "A Moveable Feast."

—*Philip Roth*

I certainly was transformed [by writing "Augie March"] and I'll probably be the last to understand how this happened, but I am very willing to look for the cause. I had written two very correct books ["Dangling Man" and "The Victim"] and I shall try to explain what I mean by correct: I seem to have felt that I, as the child of Russian Jews, must establish my authority, my credentials, my fitness to write books in English. Somewhere in my Jewish and immigrant blood there were conspicuous traces of a doubt as to whether I had the right to practice the writer's trade. Perhaps I felt that I was a pretender or an outlaw successor. After all, it wasn't Fielding, it wasn't Herman Melville who forbade me to write, it was our own Wasp establishment, represented mainly by Harvard-trained professors. I must say that these guys infuriated more than they intimidated me.

Well, I got a Guggenheim, thanks to Jim Farrell [James T. Farrell, the author of "Studs Lonigan"] and Edmund Wilson, and with wife and child I crossed the Atlantic on a ship named De Grasse carrying about a hundred Southern college girls practicing their French on stewards and deckhands with no intention of getting rid of their Southern drawl. The voyage lasted nearly two weeks. The men slept in the hold while the women and children had tiny cabins.

We got off the train in the Gare Saint-Lazare and went to the apartment Kaplan had rented for us (H. J. Kaplan, of Newark, N.J.). The Guggenheim

GETTY IMAGES

Bellow in 1953, the year "The Adventures of Augie March" was published. Photograph by Richard Meek.

A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH FABULOUS NEW SHOES!

grant amounted to five or six thousand dollars but the rate of exchange was five hundred and fifty to one. We were rather well-to-do.

I had brought several hundred pages of manuscript with me. This third book of mine was even more depressing than the first two. Two men in a hospital room, one dying, the other trying to keep him from surrendering to death.

O.K., the Americans had liberated Paris, now it was time for Paris to do something for me. The city lay under a black depression. The year, if I haven't said so before, was 1948. The gloom everywhere was heavy and vile. The Seine looked and smelled like some medical mixture. Bread and coal were still being rationed. The French hated us. I had a Jewish explanation for this: bad conscience. Not only had they been overrun by the Germans in three weeks, but they had collaborated. Vichy had made them cynical. They pretended that there was a vast underground throughout the war, but the fact seemed to be that they had spent the war years scrounging for food in the countryside. And these fuckers were also patriots. La France had been humiliated and it was all the fault of their liberators, the Brits and the G.I.s.

Depressed like everybody else, I went around looking for traces of the old Paris of Balzac, et cetera. But Balzac had been pre-nihilistic. Of course, there was something in me perhaps of Jewish origin which had nothing at all to do with nihilism. But, if I wasn't nihilistic, I was terribly downcast and writing about a hospital room, and coaxing a dying man to assert himself and claim his share of life, and thinking my gloomy thoughts beside the medicinal Seine and getting no relief from the great monuments of Paris, I sometimes wondered whether I shouldn't be thinking about a very different course of life. Maybe I should apprentice myself to an undertaker.

Apart from Kaplan, I had no friends here. Kaplan, a French-speaking Francophile, was a writer with a job at UNESCO. We were never able to say anything that mattered to each other. I used to see Jimmy Baldwin quite often, mostly at mealtimes, and I had other acquaintances as well, Herb Gold [Herbert Gold, the American writer], a bohemian comedian named Lionel Abel, and the Italian philosopher Chiaromonte, whom I had known in New York. My general impression was that Europe was defying me to do something about it, and I was deeply depressed. I seem to have been a good solid sufferer in my youth.

We arrived in the fall and when spring came I was deep in the dumps. I worked in a small studio, and as I was walking toward it one morning to wrestle yet again with death in a Chicago hospital room, I made the odd discovery that the streets of Paris were offering me some sort of relief. Parisian gutters are flushed every morning by municipal employees who open the hydrants a bit and let water run along the curbs. I seem to remember there were also rolls of burlap that were meant to keep the flow from the middle of the street. Well, there was a touch of sun in the water that strangely cheered me. I suppose a psychiatrist would say that this was some kind of hydrotherapy—the flowing water, freeing me from the caked burden of depression that had formed on my soul. But it wasn't so much the water flow as the sunny iridescence. Just the sort of thing that makes us loonies cheerful. I remember saying to myself, "Well, why not take a short break and have at least as much freedom of movement as this running water." My first thought was that I must get rid of the hospital novel—it was poisoning my life. And next I recognized that this was not what being a novelist was supposed to have meant. This bitterness of mine was intolerable, it was disgraceful, a symptom of slavery. I think I've always been inclined to accept the depressions that overtook me and I felt just now that I had allowed myself to be dominated by the atmosphere of misery or surliness, that I had agreed somehow to be shut in or bottled up. I seem then to have gone back to childhood in my thoughts and remembered a pal of mine whose surname was August—a handsome, breezy, freewheeling kid who used to yell out when we were playing checkers, "I got a scheme!" He lived in the adjoining building and we used to try to have telephone conversations with tin cans connected by waxed grocery string. His father had deserted the family, his mother was, even to a nine-year-old kid, visibly abnormal, he had a strong and handsome older brother. There was a younger child who was retarded—a case of Down syndrome, perhaps—and they had a granny who ran the show. (She was not really the granny; she'd perhaps been placed there by a social agency that had some program for getting old people to take charge of broken families.) Now, just what had happened to handsome, cheerful Chuckie and to his brothers, his mother, and the stranger whom they called granny? I hadn't seen anything of these people for three decades and hadn't a clue. So I decided to describe their lives. This came on me in a tremendous jump. Subject and language appeared at the same moment. The language was immediately present—I can't say how it happened, but I was suddenly enriched with words and phrases. The gloom went out of me and I found myself with magical suddenness writing a first paragraph.

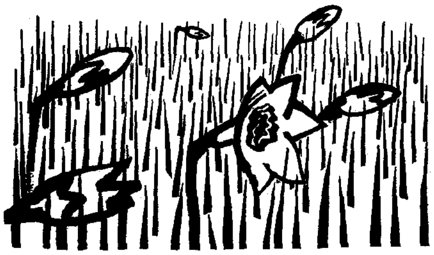
I was too busy and happy to make any diagnoses or to look for causes and effects. I had the triumphant feeling that this is what I had been born for. I pushed the hospital manuscript aside and began immediately to write in a spirit of reunion with the kid who had shouted, "I got a scheme!" It poured out of me. I was writing many hours every day. In the next two years I seldom looked into Fowler's "Modern English Usage."

Perhaps I should also add that it has been a lifelong pattern with me to come back to strength from a position of extreme weakness: I had been almost suffocated and then found that I was breathing more deeply than ever.

It was enormously exhilarating to take liberties with the language. I said what I pleased and I didn't hesitate to generalize wildly and to invoke and dismiss epochs and worlds. For the first time I felt that the language was mine to do with as I wished.

In writing "Augie March," I was trying to do justice to my imagination of things. I can't actually remember my motives clearly, but I seem to have been reacting against confinement in a sardine can and evidently felt I had failed to cope with some inner demands. Reading passages from "Augie," I seem to recognize some impulse to cover more ground, to deal with hundreds if not thousands of combined impressions. To my cold octogenarian eye, it seems overblown now, but I recognize nevertheless that I was out to satisfy an irrepressible hunger for detail. The restraint of the first two books had driven me mad—I hadn't become a writer to tread the straight and narrow. I had been storing up stuff for years and this was my dream opportunity for getting it all out. I was also up to my eyes in mental debt. By this I mean that in becoming a writer I hoped to bring out somehow my singular reactions to existence. Why else write? I had prepared and overprepared myself by reading, study, and fact-storage or idea-storage and I was now trying to discharge all this freight. Paris (Europe) may have set me off. I didn't actually understand what had happened during the Second World War until I had left the U.S.A. I now seem to have been struck by the shame of having written my first book under Marxist influence. In 1939, I had seen the Second World War as a capitalist imperialist war, like the First World War. My *Partisan Review* Leninist friends (especially Clem Greenberg [Clement Greenberg, the art critic]) had sold me on this. Even in writing "The Victim" I had not yet begun to understand what had happened to the Jews in the Second World War. Much of "Augie" was for me the natural history of the Jews in America. The Jews in Germany, Poland, Hungary, French Jews, Italian Jews had been deported, shot, gassed. I must have had them in mind in the late forties, when I wrote "Augie."

We the children of immigrants had lots of languages to speak and we spoke them with relish. We were prepared, braced, to answer questions in half a dozen tongues. The older children had not yet forgotten their Russian, and everybody spoke Yiddish. At the age of three, I was sent to Mr. Stein across the way to learn Hebrew. I was not aware as yet that languages existed. But I soon learned that in the beginning God created heaven and earth out of *Tohu v'vohu.* In Genesis 11, He decided that He did not want all of mankind to speak a single language, it was too dangerous. "Nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Rabbi Stein was our neighbor on St. Dominique Street, Montreal. When the lesson was over, I went down and sat on the curbstone to think it over.



The French-Canadian kids as they marched by twos to their classes shouted obscenities and insults at us, and I soon understood that I was a *Zhwiff*—a *muzhi (maudit) Zhwiff* at that. At six, I was enrolled in the first grade at the Devonshire School. There we sang "God Save the King" and recited the Lord's Prayer. On the way home we stopped on Roy Street to look at the Chinese in their laundry. They wore black pajamas and skullcaps as they painted their crimson labels with India ink. There was not a chance in the world that we would ever understand what they were writing or saying.

In 1924, we moved to Chicago and there we lived among Poles and Ukrainians. Everybody spoke a sort of English, and we learned certain key words, like *piva*—Polish for beer. Or *dupa*, backsides, or *kapusta*, pickled cabbage. On Division Street, the main drag, men carried office typewriters—we called them uprights—in their arms and for twenty-five cents the scribe would mount this machine on a ledge and write letters to parents or sisters in the Old Country.

The larger community was of course American and at school you were told in textbooks and by teachers that George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were *your* Presidents. You could not be excluded when the common language became your language—when you knew the National League standings, when you had learned about the Chicago gang wars. In the papers, you followed the events leading to the killing of Dion O'Banion, of the Northside bootlegging gang, and of the indictment of Al Capone for tax evasion. You knew all the facts about the death of Lingle, the *Tribune's* gang reporter, who was shot down in the Illinois Central Randolph Street tunnel. The papers informed you that Big Bill Thompson, the mayor, was in the pocket of Capone. All this was available in the dailies, when you had become familiar with the language of the historians, chroniclers, and the lingo of the insiders. You didn't know the full story from sober, reliable, dependable sources. You had come to know it by mastering the language in which it was gussied up by newspapers and by magazines like *Ballyhoo*, *College Humor*, and Henry Luce's *Time*.

Chicago was big on gab in the twenties and thirties, and under the influence of gab you came to feel yourself an insider. Verbal swagger was a limited art cultivated in the Hearst papers by contributors like O. O. McIntyre and Ted Cook. On a higher level was H. L. Mencken, of *The American Mercury*. Mencken comically expressed the dissatisfaction of intellectuals with the philistinism and comical bourgeois provinciality of the "booboisie" American in the years of prosperity that followed the First World War. He found his largest public among schoolboys like me or village atheists and campus radicals. It seemed to me that he didn't expect his prejudices to be taken very seriously.

At school, we, the sons and daughters of European immigrants, were taught to write grammatically. Knowing the rules filled you with pride. I deeply felt the constraints of "correct" English. It wasn't always easy, but we kept at it conscientiously, and in my twenties I published two decently written books. In 1948, I went to Paris to write a third novel. But by the winter of 1949 it became miserably—hatefully—apparent that I was once again on the wrong track. I fell into a depression thicker than the palpable soddenness of Paris. In those early postwar days, the city defeated and recently occupied by the Germans was experiencing a second and even more disgraceful occupation by the dollar-proud Americans, moronically happy, stupid and *mal élevés*. But the French were not more unhappy than I was when I began to recognize the extent of my latest failure. I had come to great humanistic Paris to reach what was deepest in my nature and the best I was able to do was to begin to realize the scope of my failure. Proud of my freedom, I turned out to be the least free of all the people I met. Every morning when I walked to my rented workroom I stopped to watch the municipal workers who turned on the water for the daily street wash. In the streets there was just slope enough to sluice the gutters, and watching the flow of water between the curb and the barrier of wet burlap gave me the only ease I was getting on those gray days, and the release that came with this was inexplicably verbal in form. I was not much interested in explaining this transfer from fluidity and low sparkle to . . . well, to polyglot versatility. I discovered that I could write whatever I wished, and that what I wished was to get into words the appearance of a gallery of personalities—characters like Grandma Lausch or Einhorn the fertile cripple, or Augie March himself. Years of notation ended in the discovery of a language that made everything available. A language might be restrictive or it might be expansive. An excess of corrections caused shrinking. Philip Roth puts it well when he speaks of the teeming, dazzling "specifics" in the opening pages of "Augie March." These specifics were not deliberately accumulated for some future release. They were revealed by the language. They represent the success of an unconscious strategy. You might put it that Mr. Einhorn had been in hock for years; for decades. He and I together had been waiting for an appropriate language. By that language and only that language could he be redeemed. I couldn't have been aware of this development. It was not an invention; it was a discovery.

The novel I now began to write wrote itself: "I am an American, Chicago-born." The narrator was a boyhood friend whom I had lost track of thirty years ago, when my family had moved from Augusta Street. I often wondered what had become of this handsome impulsive kid. The book I found myself writing was therefore a speculative biography.

There was something deeply unsatisfactory about the language used by contemporary writers—it was stingy and arid, it was not connected with anything characteristic, permanent, durable, habitual in the writer's outlook. For as long as I could remember I identified body and limbs, faces and their features, with words, phrases, and tones of voice. Language, thought, belief were connected somehow with noses, eyes, brows, mouths, hair—legs, hands, feet had their counterparts in language. The voice—the voices—were not invented. And whether they knew it or not all human creatures had voices and ears and vocabularies—sometimes parsimonious, sometimes limitless and overflowing. In this way the words and the phenomena were interrelated. And this was what it meant to be a writer.

Before I forget the name of the man who trained the eagle: he was an American called Mannix who had materialized in Taxco. [Chapter XVI of "Augie March" is about the attempt by Thea Fenchel, Augie's lover, to train an eagle to attack and capture the large lizards inhabiting the mountains of central Mexico.] My memory works by fits and starts and I didn't want to have to grope through my head in vain. The late Mannix, no longer among us, was one of those American eccentrics who do great and also grotesque things and arrange somehow a wonderful press for themselves.

As so often, I begin with a footnote.

Day in, day out, I watched Mannix and his eagle on a sharp slope outside the town. But I think I should go back a bit and explain what I was doing in Mexico in the summer of 1940. My late mother had paid twenty-five cents a week to an insurance agent, a stout man who used to come by regularly to collect his money. He carried a very thick black portfolio secured with many rubber bands. He was a bookish type himself, and was forever trying to engage me in conversation about the books he saw in my mother's kitchen. He was extremely keen to discuss "The Decline of the West." Smart Jewish schoolboys in Chicago were poring over Spengler at night. But, to keep to the point, I was the beneficiary of an insurance policy on which my mother paid two bits weekly. She died when I was seventeen and the policy matured eight years later. My father wanted me to turn the money over to him, all five hundred bucks of it. He needed it badly, but I refused to part with it. Now, my father was a tyrant with a perfectly good claim to be one of the all-time gallery of great tyrants. Three years earlier I had defied him by getting married. Now I declared that Anita and I would go to Mexico. It was essential that we should go. Europe was out of the question since the Germans had just overrun Paris. Deprived of Paris, I simply had to go to Mexico. Looking back, I see more agony than boldness in this decision. I was, as kids were to say later, mak-

THE PROBLEM OF DESCRIBING COLOR

If I said—remembering, in summer,
The cardinal's sudden smudge of red
In the bare gray winter woods—

If I said, red ribbon on the cocked straw hat
Of the girl with pooched-out lips
Dangling the wiry, black-nosed lapdog
In the painting by Renoir—

If I said fire, if I said blood welling from a cut—

Or flecks of poppy in the tar-grass-scented summer air
On a wind-struck hillside outside Fano—

If I said, her one red earring dangles from her silky lobe,

If she tells fortunes with a deck of fallen leaves
Until it comes out right—

Rouged nipple, mouth—

(how could you not love a woman
who cheats at Tarot?)

Red, I said. Sudden, red.

—*Robert Hass*

ing a statement. I had spent most of my life in weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable Chicago and I needed barbarism, color, glamour, and risk. So Anita and I took the Greyhound bus to New York. I can't remember why we didn't go directly to Texas, but there was some compelling reason to go to New York. Perhaps I needed to see my uncle, Willie Bellow, a brushmaker, unemployed and brooding his life away in Brownsville. I didn't clearly understand at the time, but it is easy today for me to see that he had been punished by my grandfather for joining the Bund at an early age. The Bellows did not work with their hands, they were not tradespeople, and to apprentice Willie to a brushmaker was meant to be especially humiliating and punitive because he would be working with hog bristles. It seems that in my rebellion I turned to him for support. He was an affectionate uncle, but he was an unemployed worker with a family to feed. I ought to have shared the five hundred bucks with him. I was however headed for Mexico. We went by Greyhound by way of Augusta, Georgia, where my Uncle Max was selling schmattes on the installment plan to black field hands. Our next stop was New Orleans. After hanging around the Latin Quarter pointlessly for a few days, we went on to Mexico City.

Now, Mexico in those years was everything that D. H. Lawrence said it was, and a good deal more besides. Here there were no uncles, no family bonds. I was somewhat frightened, I must admit, but certainly not intimidated. It seems to me now that I was determined not to be made by my father in Chicago, nor by my older brothers. Uncle Willie in Brownsville illustrated what might happen to a Bellow who rebelled. He would be humiliatingly shot down. Uncle Max in Georgia was a cheerful, engaging hand-to-mouth ganef. And now here I was in Mexico to stay as long as my four hundred and fifty dollars lasted. After drifting around for several weeks in places like Michoacán, we were drawn to Taxco, which had a sizable foreign colony, mostly American, but also Japanese, Dutch, and British.

I had been brought up to worry, but the lesson seems somehow not to have taken. None of the people I met in Taxco had a very firm grip on anything at all. I never gave a thought to what would happen after my money had run out. We rented a very nice house with two servants for about ten bucks a week and the Indian women shopped, cooked, and washed our clothes. I have to say also that I very rarely gave my father a thought. I was very *happy* to submit to the influence of my betters. I was intrigued with what I took to be the imaginative powers of the people I met. I see all too clearly now how limited they were, but everybody has his own pattern for liberation and my own liberation took the form of an escape from anxiety. My mood was investigative. I wanted to see firsthand what the characters I was spending my time with were up to. I sent my wife away to Acapulco—then a beach with a few huts. My strong desire was to go it alone. It never occurred to me that it might be a danger to Anita to be shipped off. Evidently I discovered a talent for doing things in a headlong style. Perhaps I was fascinated by Mannix's eagle because he was such a plunger.

The challenge was to emerge intact from the grip of these would-be dominators. To extract the secret of their powers from them while eluding their control became my singular interest. If I had any game it was this independence game. Perhaps it was not so much an interest as it was a spiritual exercise. I recognized that I did not have to do the will of others.

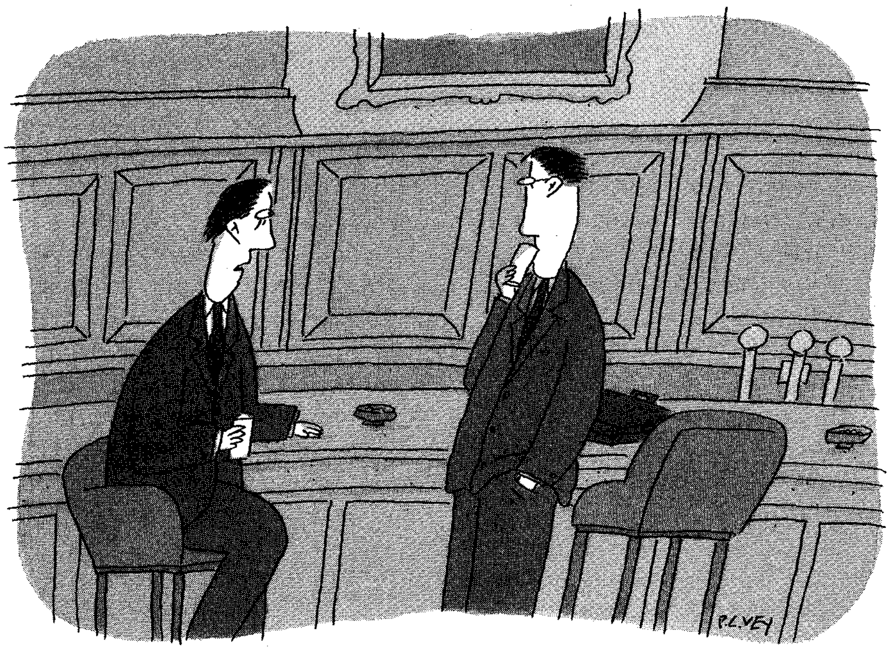
In Paris, where the book was being written, it was Charlie (Augie) who resisted influence and control. Childish and fresh, he sat at the checkerboard and shouted "I got a scheme!" I, the writer, might be hampered, depressed. Charlie, however, was immune, defying Grandma Lausch. She took a dim view of his schemes. He, however, was prepared to light out for the territory ahead.

In mountainous Mexico, where the sun shone so dramatically, so explicitly, you were never allowed to forget death. Women bought tiny coffins in the marketplace for their dead infants and carried them on their heads to the cemetery. After ten years, graves were dug up and bones thrown into a charnel house. The

Day of Death was a national holiday. Although I was most keenly aware of this, I was too highly excited for any sense of fear to take a grip on me. And then the eagle was a death-dealing life force. Seven mornings a week I was out with Mannix. I also drank far more than was good for me with American buddies in the *zócalo* (the town square). I took riding lessons and I hung out with the hard-drinking professionals who wrote for *Black Mask* and other pulps. Mannix and his eagle were my antidotes to the low company of the pulp writers. It was hard for me to grasp the fact that the free could be taught to hawk. It surprised me to learn that such a predator would obey his trainer like any lesser creature. I felt a boundless respect for the eagle nevertheless. Mannix I saw as just another showman. Later, when "Augie" was published, Mannix demanded billing in his own name and Viking Press advised me to give him a footnote. I can't recall whether this was mentioned in the text, but the eagle perched atop the water tank in Mannix's toilet, just under the ceiling. Just another domestic fowl. On the mountainside a creature of boundless freedom and power, he caught lizards and brought them to his showman master.

Robert Penn Warren once said that he liked to write in a foreign country "where the language is not your own and you are forced into yourself in a special way." I suppose it is essential that one should be forced into oneself and perhaps the foreign language is important—perhaps not. Plausible speculation, after the fact, can be pleasant. When I began to write "The Adventures of Augie March," I was living in Paris and I now ask myself whether I was at that time forced into myself in a special way and find that I am able to answer in the affirmative. It seems to me that I felt very much as I had felt in 1923, when we, the family, were reunited with my father and his cousins in Chicago. My father, who had preceded us a year earlier, and Cousin Louie were waiting for us at the Harrison Street Station when the Montreal train arrived. The date was July 4th, Independence Day. The brick streets were hot. In the Midwest, everything was alien—nature itself was different—the air, the leaves and bushes, the soil, the water, the very molecules were unfamiliar. Breathing would not be here what it had been in Canada. My father, whom I had longed to see, was now clean-shaven. I had never seen him without his mustache, and the bareness of his upper lip was a shock to me.

In the street near the platform, Cousin Louie's Dodge touring car was parked. Its celluloid panels were kept unbuttoned so that the air could circulate. Sitting at the wheel, Louie wore his hair in a long crest, like an Iroquois warrior. He belonged, physically, to a different branch of the species. He had a big thriving nose and a ruddy color. Louie had saved us, and brought us to the promised land.



"She asked for a divorce, but I outsmarted her and ran into the next room."

We followed the trolley lines up Milwaukee Avenue to the northwest side of the city, and since this was July 4th the streetcars set off the powder caps the children had taped to the rails, and in this ripping noise and smoke we drove to Cousin Flora's house. Flora, Louie's sister, welcomed us into her bungalow and fed us on smoked Great Lakes whitefish. We had come by coach, sitting up all night, and were very tired. So the living-room furniture was pushed aside and we slept on the floor. The Chicago neighborhood was raw and new. The streets had just been paved and along the Sanitary District canals the newly planted trees were coming into meagre leaf. Orange striped awnings shaded the windows. Old Montreal lay one sleepless night behind us. Chicago with its stars and stripes was utterly new. Rummaging in Cousin Flora's closets I found a coverless prose translation of the Iliad (Andrew Lang, Leaf and Myers). Achilles and Agamemnon therefore stood between me and the Chicago of Al Capone and Big Bill Thompson. It was up to me to find ways to reconcile the Trojan War with Prohibition, major-league baseball, and the Old Country as my mother remembered it. After school, in the cellar of the synagogue on Rockwell, I studied Old Testament Hebrew. At home I followed the Leopold and Loeb case in the papers. In 1926, there was the Dempsey-Tunney fight, and Charlie Chaplin's "Gold Rush." By 1930, I was an American entirely. I read *The American Mercury*, the novels of Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson.

I shall never understand how "The Adventures of Augie March" came to be written. I had arrived in Paris with wife and child to complete another novel—something about two men who shared a hospital room in Chicago and came to be close friends. The story was told by the survivor. I said to myself that I ought not to be writing such dreary stuff. What I needed was something more open and generous—a freewheeling, hang-loose book. But I was unable to shake off the hospital room and the dying man who had become my close friend. I was desperately depressed.

I had rented a room near the Place

Saint-Sulpice, where the shops sold ecclesiastical goods, and I was walking heavyhearted toward my workplace one morning when I caught up with the cleaning crew who opened the taps at the street corners and let the water run along the curbs, flushing away the cigarette butts, dogs' caca, shredded letters, orange skins, candy wrappers into the large-mouthed sewers. The sanitation sweepers dragged the soaking burlap downhill to keep the water from dispersing. Watching the flow, I felt less lame, and I was grateful for this hydrotherapy and the points of sunlight in it—nothing simpler. I did not have to kill myself in the service of art.

That "Augie March" happened in dismal postwar Europe (knowledge of the Holocaust was slowly coming to us back then) is evidence of an independent move of the mind, a decision not to surrender to horror. I discovered that I no longer wanted to be put upon by art seriousness.

My oldest brother was a lesson to me in this respect. He was determined to become a world-beater. He did, as a matter of fact, very well for himself. He became very rich. From the first he would say to me, when we moved from Canada, enough of this old crap about being Jewish. Also, my old man was oddly enough a great American patriot. He had no picture of himself as a man beating America, but my brother did. My middle brother, Sam, was also a successful businessman, and he was certainly American in hatching deals and multiplying bank accounts. But he was of the Old World with his wife and children, and granddaughters who had to be married off. There were no such compromises for Morris, the entirely American brother. We were united in our disapproval of brother Sam and his formal orthodoxy.

Paris was turning out to be a mistake. "Living up to it" consumed too much energy. Madame Lemelle, my landlady, told me that André Gide lived just down the way and if I had answered I would have said that competition was actually good for business. In any case, Mme. Lemelle was more interested in the automatic water heater I had bought and installed in her kitchen. This might have been the right kind of American gesture to make. But my real interests just then were not in the technological transformation (improvement) of Europe by America.

I had walked away from the street-washing crew saying under my breath, "I am an American—Chicago-born." The "I" in this case was not autobiographical. I had in mind a boyhood friend from Augusta Street in Chicago of the mid-twenties. I hadn't seen Augie since the late twenties; the forties were now ending. What had become of my friend, I couldn't say. It struck me that a fictional biography of this impulsive, handsome, intelligent, spirited boy would certainly be worth writing. Augie had introduced me to the American language and the charm of that language was one of the charms of his personality. From him I had unwittingly learned to go at things freestyle, making the record in my own way—first to knock, first admitted.

Of course, I improvised freely from the events of my own life. Immigrants differed considerably in their attitudes toward America. Some continued to live mentally and emotionally in the Old Country. Others "Americanized" themselves. To Jews from other parts of the country, the Eastern Seaboard Jews seemed less confidently American, more cowed by old money and old names. My father understood the U.S.A. rather well. I discovered that Cahan of the Yiddish *Forward* made a serious effort to educate his immigrant readers. Though he was a socialist he understood that the older Europeans had little use for Marxism. My father knew quite a lot about the Constitution, the Congress and the Presidency. I remember being lectured by him on Roger Williams's banishment from Massachusetts Bay Colony and his hospitality to the Jews and Quakers. My old man would say that in the Old Country Jews had to carry masses of identification papers—*cartes de séjour*. Here you were never stopped and asked for your papers.

I had an eighth-grade teacher—Mrs. Jenkins was her name, a wonderful old woman. Her father had been a prisoner in Andersonville, and in the mid-twenties she would tell the kids his Civil War stories. Mrs. Jenkins herself was white-haired. The G.A.R. was still a lively topic in Chicago. On Memorial Day, the old men lined up on Randolph and Michigan, in front of the public library. The public library was built on land given by the Civil War veterans. On the second floor of the north end there was a war museum. People were not familiar with it. They were at the south end, where the books were. But upstairs at the north end was an enormous display of regimental flags, guns, photographs, and on Veterans Day old soldiers lined up for the annual march. The G.A.R. was still represented. I read a lot about the Civil War, Grant's memoirs and Sherman's as well.

I took a tiny hotel room on Rue des Saints-Pères. Across the way pneumatic drills were at work on the construction of a hospital or medical school. The room below mine was occupied by an old Italian scholar named Caffi. He was tall but frail and had an immense head of hair and a small nervous laugh, but he was a serious man. In 1917, as an Italian journalist in Petersburg, he had spent the funds his paper sent him to feed starving children. Now he lived on the money raised by his devoted followers. His supporters kept him alive and would occasionally come from Italy to visit him. Apparently he was an accomplished Greek scholar. Most of the day he passed in bed drinking coffee and writing learned notes to himself.

I tried occasionally to be helpful. As he was washing his feet in the sink one day, the bowl of the washstand broke and a chunk of it fell on the instep of the supporting right foot. The wound was painful. He wrapped a large towel around it and did not leave his bed for an entire week. Among his acquaintances and followers there were some who said he had wounded himself on purpose, from resentment toward a friend who had tried to get him a job. A strange theory. When one of his visitors remarked that I did not seem to be getting what an American should get out of Paris, M. Caffi wisely replied that it was only natural that I should be thinking of America most of the time. It was Chicago before the Depression that I went to in my room in the morning, not misty Paris with its cold statues and admirable bridges. The book had taken off, writing itself very rapidly; I was coming to be strangely independent of place. Chicago itself had grown exotic to me. A descendant of Russian-Jewish immigrants, I was writing about Chicago in odd corners of Paris and, afterward, in Austria, Italy, Long Island, and New Jersey. To speak of rootless or rooted persons is all very well, but I felt that the cultural vocabulary of the university crowd should be avoided. I listened to Mr. Caffi when he described America as the new Rome. I was deferential and respectful, aware that he was trying to do good, to raise my mental level. He did as much for his young Italian disciples—his helpers. They brewed his coffee and mothproofed his winter clothes. Half-blind and often bedridden, Caffi directed his activities. He evidently saw that I was an American doing something characteristically American—a latter-day Roman. What I learned in Europe was how deeply involved I was with the U.S.A.

A major figure in Europe was an intellectual—poverty was one of his badges and he was supported by his followers. A young Italian had attached himself to Caffi as his delegate, representative, and helper. I was fascinated by this very different un-American version of a higher life, but I pursued very different aims. Sr. Caffi probably saw this more clearly. I think also that I was very lucky. For me, the overpowering brother was the totally American brother. He overpowered me and in a sense he led me to write "The Adventures of Augie March." He didn't like the book when he read it, but he granted that I had in my cockeyed way done something significant and it was necessary that he should figure in the book. He was aggressive and I recognized in him the day-to-day genius of the U.S.A.

In the opening sentence of my work-in-progress I don't say that I am an American Jew. I simply declare that I am an American. My eldest brother was the first to point out the advantages of this. America offered to free us from the control of the family and of the Jewish community. After school he was a "baggage smasher," loading trucks with suitcases and trunks for home delivery. He wore football jerseys with broad bands of orange and purple. In a few years, he had city-hall connections. He wore a derby and a velvet collar to his topcoat, a silk scarf with polka dots, and pointed shoes of patent leather. He was slick, savvy, and combative. He was preparing for the bar exam and he described himself as bagman for a member of the House of Representatives. He opened his gladstone bag for me once and showed me paper money it was crammed with.

He brought home copies of *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Liberty Magazine*, and *The Literary Digest*. These influential papers gave you an idealized orientation to the mental life of the country—its farmers, its laborers, its wives and mothers, its mechanics and athletes, its heroes—its promoters and opportunists, its social climbers, its White Pants Willies and marketers of drowned Florida real estate, New England boy prodigies like Mark Tidd—Marcus Aurelius Fortunatus Tidd: images of what Americans were, or might become. There was a great demand for images or models of rough-and-ready frontier types such as Walt Whitman had offered to the country in "Leaves of Grass" and "Democratic Vistas." In a country of immigrants, there was a singular need for prototypes, especially among the young.

In my father's generation, there was a great sense of release from tsarist officialdom, not merely oppressive but downright crazy. My father believed that the U.S.A. offered the Jews unheard-of opportunities for development—the first rational government in history. And the law of the land, guaranteed in the founding documents. My father took an exceptional interest in the U.S. Constitution and the privileges of citizenship, for which Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy had prepared him. He said, "That's what I call a deal. I'm glad to pay taxes in a country where the Constitution says I'm a citizen, not a Jew." This put the work of the founders under some strain, he thought, but there was no danger in this since justice as the world acknowledges was taught to Israel by Moses under the direct supervision of God. But from the beginning the life of the Jews in America was not what it had always been in Europe, with the ghettos—the Jews in each country belonging to a separate community of Jews. They were taxed not as Jews but as citizens, nor were they subject to special levies. As a Jew, you have a connection of your own to the life of the country, and in many respects you could be as American as you pleased. Naturally, there were private organizations which excluded you from membership, but such conduct would force you to remember the mass murder, gassing camps, the contrast of seriousness with sophomoric provocation.

My old man was odd that way; he was a great patriot, seeing the safety of the Jews as dependent on the stability and balance of the rational founders.

My brother's Americanism was altogether different. He was made for Chicago. He adopted the style of a racketeer and put himself over as a wheeler-dealer. An underworld coloration made legitimate business seem or sound crooked.

And, strangely enough, my father became a patriotic American. He knew quite a lot of U.S. history, though he read only the Yiddish papers. He often took me aback. He'd say, "Tell me about this man Roger Williams." "Where did you find that name?" I said. "I read about him in *The Forward*," my father said. "There was a series of articles on Rhode Island."

Abraham Cahan, editor of the Yiddish paper, saw to it that his readers received instruction in the rights and duties of citizenship.

I remember that we arrived at the Dearborn Street Station in Chicago on July 4th. We were met by my father and his cousin and employer, Louie, who owned a bakery on Marshfield Avenue. A tall, vigorous man, with a red Indian strip of hair down the middle of his head. But I was truly astonished by my father—he had shaved his mustache and the nudity of his face shocked me. Among the alien phenomena of Chicago, this was, on that first day, probably the hardest to absorb. We climbed into Cousin Louie's touring car with its flapping celluloid curtains and we followed the car tracks, on which the kids had laid small explosive devices that were set off by the trolley cars. The air smelled of gunpowder. War veterans were firing the guns they had brought home from France. I was too big a boy, at nine, to be dandled on my father's knee, and, besides, the disappearance of his cigarette-saturated mustache had made another man of him, temporarily. Montreal was nice, it was old-fashioned, European, its parts were interconnected. The crude Chicago of those days was de-

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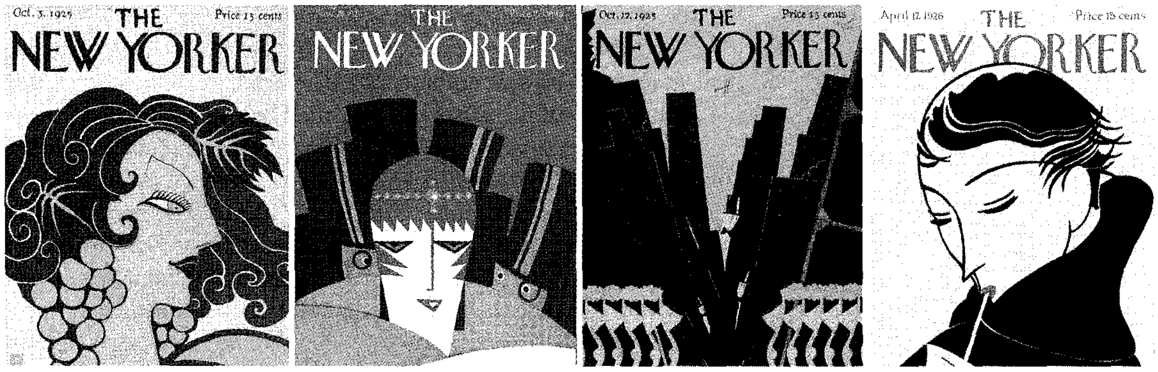
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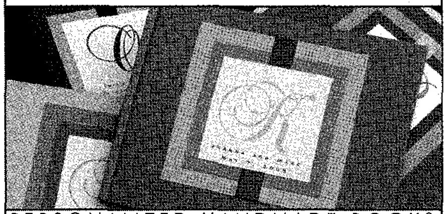

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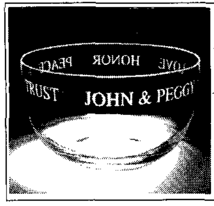

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scribed by an English visitor as a string of industrial villages from factory to factory. The streets of the Polish neighborhood where we settled smelled of sauerkraut and home-brewed Prohibition beer. Mechanical player pianos everywhere played polkas and waltzes. In proletarian immigrant Chicago of the twenties there was little culture, but schoolchildren didn't know what culture was, and I was in any case at a level of development below books, music, painting, and conversation. I found myself in a place where everything was strange—even the trees and their leaves. Colors, spaces, the air itself was different, clumsier, coarser—as if made of heavier molecules. I was now, as my parents had been earlier in Canada, an immigrant in an altogether different physical reality. Here everything demanded revision, and I was aware that my senses were being adapted to the chemical or tactile demands of the new place—its atmospheres, its hidden variations had to be absorbed.

The rest—classrooms, playgrounds, marching in the corridors—came easily. Baseball gave me a certain amount of trouble at first, because I had spent my eighth year in the hospital. [The eight-year-old Bellow was hospitalized with acute appendicitis and peritonitis that led to life-threatening complications.] I worked hard at physical fitness, but when a grounder passed one of the boys said, "You looked at that ball as if it was an object of idle curiosity."

Pittsburgh was famous for steel, Detroit for automobiles, Akron for rubber tires, Swift and Armour exported beef and bacon from their Southside Chicago plants. Donnelly the printer published telephone directories of many cities, and in Chicago the educated classes thought of the city as a literary center. Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, Edgar Lee Masters, Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay came here to study, to write for the newspapers or the ad agencies. The Chicago *Journal*, a paper that did not survive the Depression, published a weekly literary supplement. The two Hearst papers were hospitable to writers. High-school children also read Mencken's *American Mercury*. One of the most notorious crimes of the mid-twenties was committed by Leopold and Loeb, university students whose heads were turned by the Nietzschean ideas they wildly misunderstood. They were defended by Clarence Darrow, whose courtroom speeches ran in the papers together with the gang killings and the urban sketches of Ben Hecht. In high school, at the age of fourteen, we were doing "The Merchant of Venice" and "Julius Caesar," and, on our own, Dos Passos's "Manhattan Transfer" and Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment." We read the "Chicago authors," of course, Dreiser's "Sister Carrie" and, a little later, Farrell's "Studs Lonigan." My closest friend, in early adolescence, was Syd Harris, who lived on Iowa Street, just east of Robey. An only child and a difficult one, he tyrannized his London-born mother and his Russian papa. Skinny Sydney, with his wild ways, his tics, and his rages, ran the show—he lied, he threatened, and he stormed, he played the genius and the dictator. A large dinner table occupied the little parlor and there we read our esoteric books. We wrote at opposite ends of the big table, on yellow second-sheets from the Woolworth ten-cent store. At this square borax table, its surface protected by a carpet-like cover, we wrote stories, poems, essays, dialogues, political fantasies, essays on Marxism—on subjects we didn't really know too much about.

When well-meaning Mrs. Harris looked in on us to ask some harmless, encouraging question, Sydney would shout, "Get back to the kitchen, you old Cockney bitch. How dare you interrupt." And, losing her temper, one eye jumping out of focus when she bristled, his mama would answer, "Yer no child of mine. They switched yer on me in the hospital."

It was theatre, of course.

Mrs. Harris thought of me as a well-behaved boy of good family from whom he, Sydney, could learn to be civil and show proper respect. I was brought up to defer to my elders. Millennia of correct conduct, I thought, and much good they did us, I think today. But I am still shocked by Sydney's false rages, as when he shouted at his ma, get out you old "whore." This was pushing outrage and bohemian swagger too far. I thought, My mother wouldn't have let me get away with it, and my father would have knocked me down.

At fifteen, we wrote a book together, and one winter day on Division Street we flipped a coin to see which of us would take the manuscript to New York

City to be published. Sydney, when he won the toss, stuffed the pages under his sweater. We pooled our money—some sixty cents—and immediately he was in the street, with his thumb up. In a matter of days, he was in New York. He wrote that he was staying on Riverside with John Dos Passos, who was dazzled by Sydney's gifts. Dos Passos had six white spitz dogs who were walked on triple leashes, twice a day.

Meantime, Mrs. Harris had reported the disappearance of her only child to the Missing Persons Bureau. She came to the house and questioned me in my mother's sickroom. [Bellow's mother was dying of breast cancer.] I said I knew nothing. Adolescents in those days were bound by gangland rules. You didn't rat on a buddy. My eldest brother said that I should be questioned at police headquarters. We went to Eleventh and State Streets, Sydney's mother weeping, my bossy brother determined to tag me hard and teach me a lesson. I repeated my lies to the Missing Persons Bureau, and felt that I could tough it out with the best of them.

But my brother now broke into my locked drawer and found Sydney's letters. After dinner that night he read them to the family. In the opinion of the New York experts who had read our manuscript, Sydney was an obvious winner. Covici the publisher had commissioned a book on Chicago's revolutionary youth and paid Sydney an advance of two hundred dollars. In the judgment of the publishing illuminati, I would do well to enter my father's business. Only my mother grieved for me. Everybody else was delighted to see me go down in flames.

Famous and rich, Sydney came home on the train. He was far too busy now to write a book for Covici. He soon became the legman for Milton Mayer, who covered Chicago for *P.M.*, the New York paper founded by Marshall Field. Eventually, Sydney became a Chicago *Daily News* columnist who specialized in the education of adolescents. Sydney's early schooling in avant-garde literature was singularly advantageous. Beneath his ivory tower there was a gold mine.

BUSINESS AT THE IMPROV
MUELLER

I don't like that book, "Seize the Day." I never think about it, I never take it up, I don't touch it. But I have to admit that you ask the question of questions, and that I don't know how I can possibly answer. [I'd asked him if he knew why, in writing "Seize the Day," he'd moved from the euphoric openness of "Augie March" back into the dour ethos of the pre-"Augie" world of "The Victim" and "Dangling Man."] Augie is the freest of the free, while Wilhelm is a full catalogue of repressions and civilized mantraps. I sympathize with Wilhelm but I don't like him. Seated at the checkerboard, he has no scheme. The reader, however, is attracted to him because of his "sensibilities." His is, of course, a common type—he calls on others to "give" or "encourage." His is the commonest of stories. But my task was to represent him, not to recommend him. In him we see the failures of "feeling"—the characteristic American slackness of virtues and the inanity of good counsel.

Many readers assumed that as an enlightened person I would naturally be on Tommy Wilhelm's side. On the contrary, I saw him as a misfit wooing his hard-nosed father with the corrupt platitudes of affection, or job-lot, bargain-sale psychological correctness. I thought he was one of these people who make themselves pitiable in order to extract your support. The clue to my true opinion about this may be found in the zany mental-health lectures of Dr. Tamkin. The absurd, phony Dr. Tamkin was a great help to me—the advice-giving phony we turn to for guidance, the false man of science who has all the answers.

I've thought quite a lot about the New York setting of "Seize the Day" and I'm inclined to agree that the loneliness, shabbiness, and depression of the book find a singular match in the uptown Broadway surroundings. I think that for old-time Chicagoans the New Yorkers of "Seize the Day" are emotionally thinner, or one-dimensional. We had fuller or, if you prefer, richer emotions in the Middle West. I think I congratulated myself on having been able to deal with New York, but I never won any of my struggles there, and I never responded with full human warmth to anything that happened there.

I lived on the Upper West Side for some time. Adam's mother, Sondra, lived in the Ansonia before we were married, and I used to spend my nights there. That was in the early fifties, and that hotel lent itself to "Seize the Day"—the Insomnia, I liked to call it.

I found a nice apartment on Riverside Drive. But somehow it just didn't work. I never knew any real comfort in New York. I always felt challenge and injury around the corner. I had always considered it a very risky place, where one was easily lost. And I think I saw New York through the being of Isaac Rosenfeld. [Rosenfeld, a fiction writer and essayist, was a Chicago native and had been a friend of Bellow's since childhood.] He came to take the town and he got took. From his standpoint it proved to be a very dangerous place. He came with this pretty wife to qualify for his Ph.D. He came from Chicago and he got himself deeper and deeper into the pit.

Isaac would almost certainly have agreed that New York might save him. Chicago had no hope to extend to him. The just married pair, Isaac and his Greek-American bride, found a flat in Greenwich Village. His "carefree" circus on Barrow Street attracted the bohemian intellectual crowd. Isaac became one of the wits of this group, a serious person who allowed himself to play the clown following the example of the Dostoyevskian underground man. During the war, he was in command of a barge in the New York Harbor. An ingenious, playful father, he filled the apartment with cats, dogs, guinea pigs, parakeets with whom the two kids were on excellent terms. The son, like Isaac himself, died of a heart attack in his mid-thirties. The daughter is now a Buddhist nun and resides in a French convent. Isaac's wife remarried when she was widowed and in her late eighties lives on in Honolulu. She's partially paralyzed. His considerable gifts as a writer never matured in New York. He became a follower of the onetime Freudian Wilhelm Reich. This would not have been possible in any other American city. It took Isaac years to cast off the Reichian influence. This ideological ordeal, one might say, followed him from Vienna to New York.

Also, New York was the place where *I* did the Reichian therapy. That was really a horror. I didn't realize how terrible it was, and that it happened under Isaac's influence. Because he insisted that I had to have this done, since he was doing it. About three years. Once or twice a week. There was a box in the doctor's office and you had to take off every stitch and lie on the couch. I think I probably was doing this during that "Seize the Day" period. Not anything I'm terribly proud of, but you could not keep your respect for yourself if you had not faced the ultimate rigors. And it was a link between Isaac and me. I felt that I could not let him go through this without going through it myself so that I would know what was happening to him.

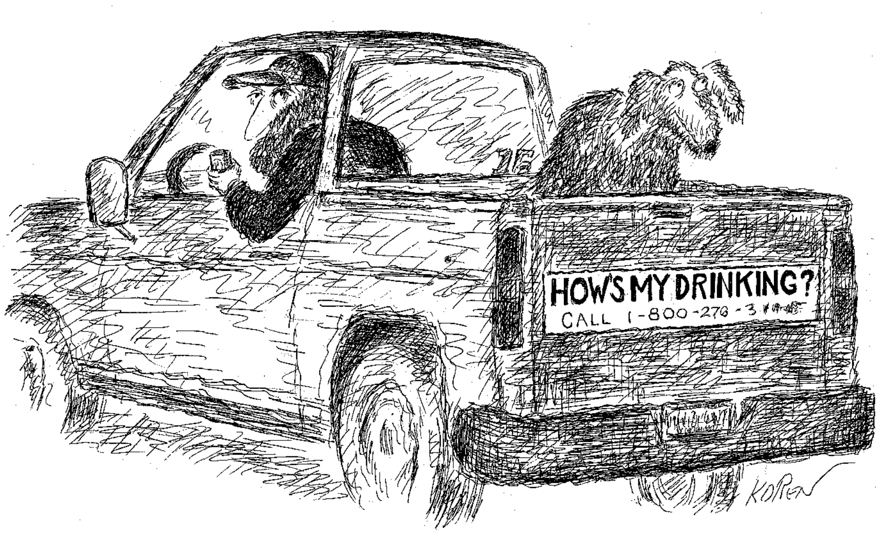
I suppose I felt utterly isolated in New York. It was the sort of place that generated such feelings, and there was nothing you could turn to. I mean, if you turn to somebody for help you'd make the biggest mistake in your life if you choose Dr. Tamkin. I knew the original of Dr. Tamkin. He was a friend of two friends. The second friends were a European couple whom I liked very much, and their only child had been killed in an accident and "Dr. Tamkin" came and took charge, emotional charge, of the family, as he would. And I hated him for it. I saw what he was doing; he had no feeling for these people. He was just a scatterbrain, a poseur. Self-anointed helper of mankind, full of generosity to everybody. That was the real background of this foolish grotesque. She was a Jewish Frenchwoman. He was a German Jew. Their child, about fifteen years old, was knocked down in the street by a truck on his way home from school. She went to the hospital, where she was told that he was O.K. Then he had an embolism, as a result of this accident. And when she got home from the hospital the phone was ringing to tell them that he was dead. They had just lost their son whom they loved with all their hearts and he put himself forward as their protector and their guide, with all this psychological garbage of his.

It was a very bad time. Maybe what I was thinking is if you bring your hopes to New York this inevitably happens to you. There's a connection between Tommy Wilhelm and Isaac. Because he does come to New York again, to reëstablish his connection with his father and his mother, his grave, and so on.

Still, having said all this, I can't really see that I am so utterly place-dependent. I've never taken much stock in the notion that London, Paris, St. Petersburg, and other great capitals have *made* the literature of their respective countries. The cities are wonderful, but one must be wary of historicism. Historicism is an academic product whose premise is that urban multitudes make the culture of their countries. Together we share the high significance or glamour of Paris and London. During the Depression, I bought a set of Balzac and was taken over by the glamour of the great joint enterprise of the city of Paris and its triumphant capitalism, its erotic oddities and vices, the mixed legacy of its Revolution, its Napoleonic days of triumph. its *jeune ambitieux*, its inventive restless criminals, its bankers, its lovers. This wonderful mixture or compound had a glamour of its own. We wanted to know all that could be known about it.

Its attractions are boundless, but is it everything it claims to be? We are fascinated by it, but we are also wary of its claims to be the setting of settings and the formative power behind the phenomena. We had learned in our Chicagos and New Yorks that the great treasures of culture were not indispensable—that one can live without it.

It may be that the swing from "Augie" to "Seize the Day" was part of a lifelong pattern. It seems to have started when I was a kid in Montreal, dying in the hospital; when I was released from the Royal Victoria Hospital, we went immediately to Chicago. There I grew up, worshipped health, became muscular and

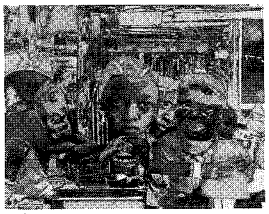


chinned myself, and so forth. I was making it, emotionally, in Chicago. After that, when I got out of college and went to New York, it was more of the same. But I had an Uncle Willie Bellow, in Brownsville, who was a very gentle, depressed man. He was a brushmaker. He disappointed his father, my grandfather. My grandfather apprenticed him to a brushmaker. This apprenticeship contained a hidden disgrace, because as a brushmaker he would have to deal with hog's bristles. This was actually my grandfather's point. So there was poor Willie, an illegal immigrant in New York. I don't know how he ever got there—he took a train with his family from Montreal to New York, but there was no record of his entry into the country, so he couldn't apply for citizenship papers. I loved him dearly. He was a very very feeling, cheerful, generous humorist, without much power of self-expression. And he died in the early fifties in his place of work, at the brush factory, in Brooklyn. It's true, many dark things were happening as I came to write "Seize the Day."

"As much a disease as he is a man" perfectly sums up "Henderson the Rain King." [Bellow is alluding to a description of Henderson I'd used in my question.] Henderson *is* of course looking for a cure. But the bourgeois is defined by his dread of death. All we need to know about sickness as it relates to bourgeois amour propre and death we can learn from Thomas Mann's "The Magic Mountain." The difficulty in approaching Henderson following this outlook is that Henderson is so unlike a bourgeois. In his case, the categories wither away.

It seems to me that I didn't know what I was doing when I wrote "The Rain King." I was looking for my idea to reveal itself as I investigated the phenomena—the primary phenomenon being Henderson himself, and it presently became clear to me that America has no idea—not the remotest—of what America is. Europeans would agree, enthusiastically, with this finding. They will tell you that America is *inculte* or *nyekulturny*. But how far does that get us? It is true that culture is not one of Henderson's direct concerns. He could not compete with his father's gentlemanly generation—his immediate ancestors who knew Homer and read Dante in Italian. He had a very different take on American life. You refer to this, rightly, as his wacky anthropology. To a young Chicagoan it seemed the science of sciences. I learned that what was right among the African Masai was wrong with the Eskimos. Later I saw that this was a treacherous doctrine—morality should be made of sterner stuff. But in my youth my head was turned by the study of erratic—or goofy—customs. In my early twenties I was a cultural relativist. I had given all of that up before I began to write "Henderson."

Roth likes "Henderson," and I am grateful to him for that. He sees it as a screwball stunt, but he sees, too, that the stunt is sincere and the book has great screwball authority. I was much criticized by reviewers for yielding to anarchic or mad impulses and abandoning urban settings and Jewish themes. But I continue to insist that my subject ultimately was America. Its oddities were not accidental but substantial. Again, Roth puts it better than I could have done. Henderson is that "undirected human force whose raging insistence miraculously does get through." The wacky Henderson led me through my last and wackiest course in anthropology. My diploma, if I had been given one, would have told the world that I was a graduate of the college of dionysiacs. Did I know what I was doing? Not very clearly. My objective was to "burst the spirit's sleep." Readers would share this—or they would not. Alfred Kazin asked what Jews could possibly know about American millionaires. For my purposes, I felt that I knew enough. Chanler Chapman, the son of the famous John Jay Chapman, was the original of Eugene Henderson—the tragic or near-tragic comedian and the buffoon heir of a great name. I can't imagine what I saw in him or why it was that I was so goofily drawn to him. Those years were the grimmest years of my life. My father had died, a nephew in the Army had committed suicide. My wife had left me, depriving me also of my infant son. I had sunk my small legacy into a collapsing Hudson River mansion. For the tenth time I went back to page 1, beginning yet another version of "Henderson." ♦



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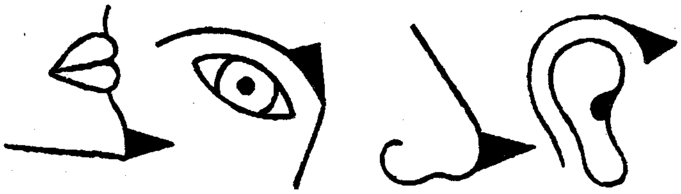


PHILIPPE WEISBECKER

THE THEATRE

TEARS BEFORE BEDTIME

Martin McDonagh's perverse twist on the children's story.

BY HILTON ALS

At times, silences and pauses onstage are as lovely to hear as a beautifully constructed monologue or a sharp turn of phrase. When an actor pulls back to consider the actions of another actor, wordlessly and without engaging in any showoffy stage business—adjusting his tie, or moving a teacup around on a saucer—the playwright's ideas about our interconnectedness can be made abundantly clear, even without the "words, words, words" that Hamlet complained of. But, for those moments of silence to work, the playwright must be attuned to what it is that his characters *aren't* saying, and he must not be afraid of damaging the play's pacing or diffusing the plot. Among contemporary American playwrights, Sam Shepard and David Mamet are the masters of the pause; in England, Harold Pinter has conducted, in play after play, a kind of advanced seminar on how to balance beats with short declarative sentences in order to convey the horror show of the characters' inner lives. But in the English-speaking theatre world Irish playwrights—or playwrights who use Ireland as their subject—have a peculiar advantage: they have at their disposal the seemingly endless verbiage of their countrymen. (Beckett, of course, is the singular exception to this rule.)

The astonishing thirty-five-year-old playwright Martin McDonagh (who was born in England, though both his parents are Irish) has such a love of language and of his characters' comings and goings through the trapdoors of Irish domestic life and history that you may, at first, wonder where the silences are in his plays. But they're there, embedded in his characters' consciousness as the foundation on which their extraordinary everyday speech stands.

After years of writing radio scripts that went mostly unnoticed, McDonagh, who never finished high school, let alone university, hit upon the idea of writing for the theatre. He had seen only a handful of plays when he wrote his first, "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," in 1996. Set in a remote town in Connemara, County Galway—McDonagh was familiar with western Ireland from childhood visits to his grandparents—"The Beauty Queen of Leenane" is a profound work of the imagination *about* the imagination. Mag Folan and her forty-year-old daughter, Maureen, live together in a cottage and keep chickens. Mag is a monument of peevish self-absorption; Maureen is her bitter and reluctant servant. As the play opens, it is raining. Maureen comes inside, and immediately the two women engage in a roundelay of recrimination:

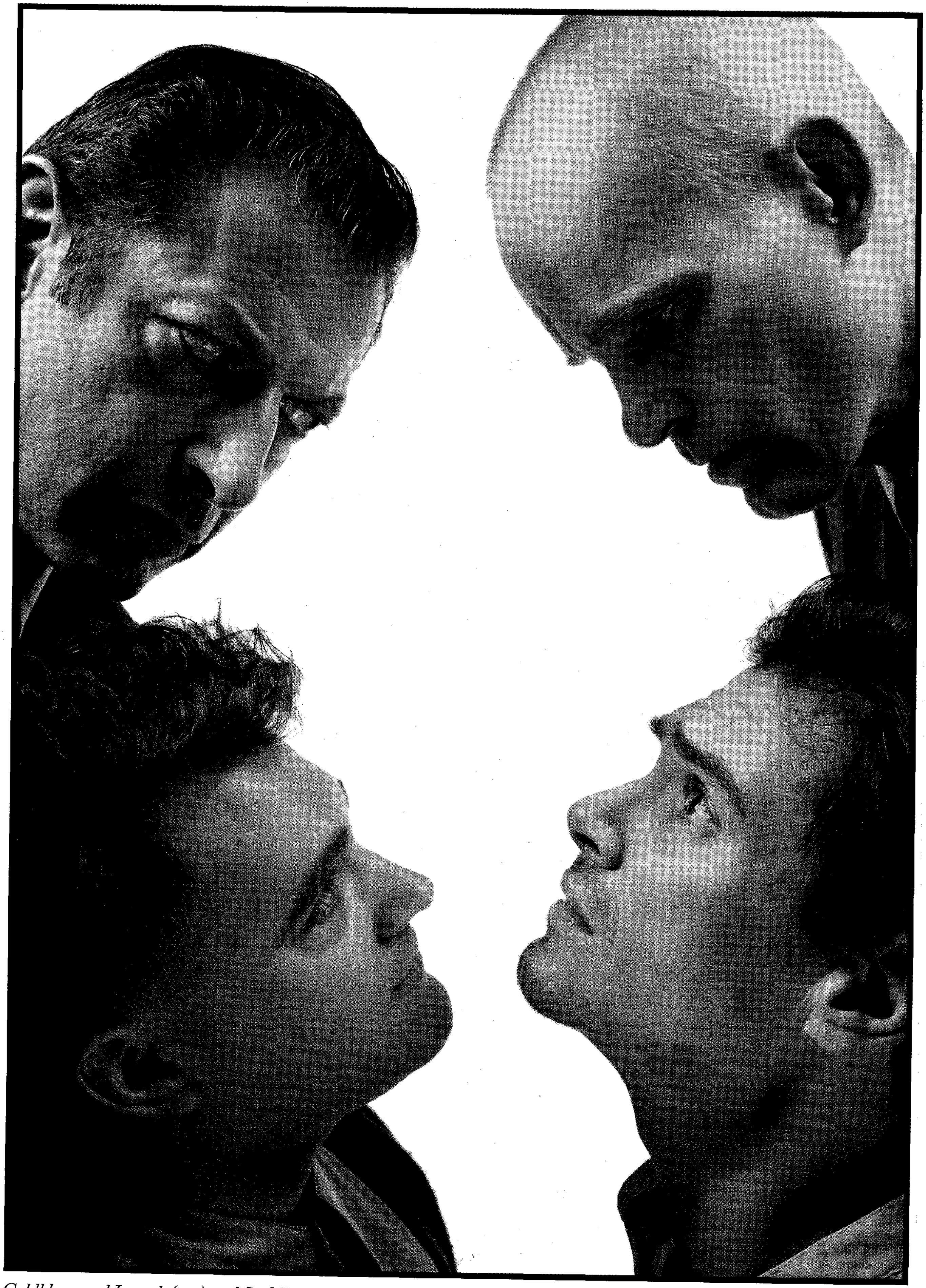
> MAG: Wet, Maureen?
> MAUREEN: Of course wet.
> MAG: Oh-h . . . I did take me Complan.
> MAUREEN: So you *can* get it yourself so.
> MAG: I can. (*Pause*) Although lumpy it was, Maureen.
> MAUREEN: Well, can I help lumpy?
> MAG: No.
> MAUREEN: Write to the Complan people so, if it's lumpy.
> MAG: (*Pause*) You do make me Complan nice and smooth. (*Pause*) Not a lump at all, nor the comrade of a lump.

It's the "comrade of a lump" that makes this scene vibrate with McDonagh's hard poetry—that and Mag's pauses, which she uses as pit stops, in a sense, between her demands for Maureen's attention and care.

When "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" was staged here, it won a number of honors, the Drama Desk Award among them. And it's easy to see why McDonagh became successful so quickly: he was not preaching a certain ideology, and his plots did not overwhelm the characters; his characters were simply organic to the world they emerged from—a world that was at once realistic and fantastical. In his 2001 play "The Lieutenant of Inishmore," for instance, McDonagh gives us Padraic, a young sociopath from western Ireland who has been rejected by the I.R.A., and who takes vengeance on the people he feels are responsible for society's failings. As we first meet Padraic, he is torturing a pot dealer, who hangs upside down from scaffolding. When the dealer complains about the pain that Padraic is inflicting, Padraic responds, "James Hanley, don't keep going on about your stupid fecking toenails! The way you talk it sounds as if I took off a rake of them, when it was only two I took off, and them only small ones. . . . And if it was so concerned you were about the health of them toenails it would've been once in a while you cleaned out the muck from under them."

Perverse and hysterical, McDonagh's most recent plays have grown only richer and more verbally complex. And as with any true artist, especially one as unaccountably strong as McDonagh (his talent is so big that it sometimes feels as if the stage could not contain it), audiences should be grateful for, and learn from, whatever new work is available to them. Certainly, that was the feeling among McDonagh's fans who crowded into the Booth one recent evening to see "The Pillowman," which won England's Olivier Award as the best new play of 2004.

Katurian (Billy Crudup) is the author of hundreds of grisly short stories, only one of which has been published. As the play opens, he is being interrogated in a gray room with high ceilings. ("Pillowman" is set in an unnamed country, under a "totalitarian dictator-



Goldblum and Ivanek (top) and Stuhlbarg and Crudup (bottom) in "The Pillowman." Photograph by Steve Pyke.

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ship.") The reason: someone has murdered a number of children, employing the unusual and sadistic methods that Katurian invented for his stories. The policemen who are grilling him, Tupolski (Jeff Goldblum) and Ariel (Zeljko Ivanek), are short on subtlety and long on banalities—or, rather, on what Katurian considers banal. Over the course of the evening, they tell anecdotes about their own "problem childhoods," which they fail to transform into art. "I kind of hate any writing that's even vaguely autobiographical," Katurian says. "I think people who only write about what they know only write about what they know because they're too fucking stupid to make anything up."

Tupolski and Ariel are a kind of hard-edged Abbott and Costello, and they represent the real world that Katurian, a ghastly fantasist, has never dealt with. They believe that uncovering the facts in the case will show them how Katurian got to be the way he is; they want to understand his stories, both on and off the page. But what writer has been able to explain the source of his art, his vision? "The Pillowman" is, among other things, a play about the artistic process, and about how an author's imagination can overtake us, for good or for ill. Tupolski engages Katurian in a number of philosophical discussions about the nature of storytelling, and about the truth one finds at the heart of the story. But Katurian, like many fiction writers, considers the truth specious. Interrogators and prisoner are caught in a deadlock between reality and fairy tale.

Like Pirandello—especially in "Six Characters in Search of an Author"—McDonagh is interested here in exploring the intellectual components of fiction: what makes a story work and where the impulse to tell it comes from in the first place. Of course, this process is familiar to readers of contemporary novels by writers ranging from Joan Didion to Jonathan Safran Foer, wherein the tale told is interrupted, questioned, and redefined by the author throughout. That McDonagh is able to make something similar work onstage, and that he is able to weave such large questions into a coherent dramatic frame, says a great deal about his formidable will and skill.

As the interrogation proceeds, Katurian hears his brother Michal (the brilliant Michael Stuhlbarg) being tortured in the cell next door. Why? Tupolski and Ariel believe that Michal is the murderer, inspired to violence by his sibling's stories. After his interrogation, Katurian delivers a monologue to the audience. He begins:

> Once upon a time, there was a little boy upon whom his mother and father showered nothing but love, kindness, warmth, all that stuff. He had his own little room in a big house in the middle of a pretty forest. He wanted for nothing: all the toys in the world were his; all the paints, all the books, papers, pens. All the seeds of creativity were implanted in him from an early age and it was writing that became his first love: short stories, fairy tales, little novels . . . and some of them were good, some of them were very good.

But there's something wrong with this idyll. The "little boy," as Katurian calls himself, hears sounds after he settles into bed. These are no mere things that go bump in the night. The sounds coming from the bedroom next to his are screams—the sounds of a child being tortured. Is it a nightmare? Or is it real? The play's excellent director, John Crowley, presents a garish live tableau above Crudup as he delivers this monologue with terrifying efficiency. With his boyish good looks and perennially pleasant persona, Crudup does an amazing job of drawing us into his character's lurid, carny-show mind: we trust him, and the minute that we do he ups the ante by telling us something even more frightening. (It's Maurice Sendak by way of Shockheaded Peter.)

Michal may or may not have been the tortured child Katurian thought he heard. Stocky and powerful, Michal, who has "learning difficulties," is an overgrown, demanding baby. And, like most children who have suffered injustices, he won't let them go. When the brothers find themselves together in a cell, he asks Katurian to tell him a story. Katurian responds with the story of the Pillowman, who suffocates young children out of something akin to love. But when Katurian places a pillow over his troubled brother's face to end his misery, we cannot be sure that he—Katurian—is out of his own misery. The stories continue in his head and on the stage. And, between the words, the silence is deafening. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Metropolis, *by Elizabeth Gaffney (Random House; $24.95).* Gaffney's début novel tells the story of a young German immigrant who is drawn into the criminal underworld of eighteen-seventies New York. The progress of the book's hero—a Zelig let loose in Hogan's Alley—which takes him from Barnum's circus to the outer orbit of Tammany Hall, suggests both an indictment and a validation of the nascent American dream. Gaffney marshals formidable research into an engaging narrative that explores opium dens, the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the secret language of criminals, and she writes with arresting lyricism about the hands that built the city. The book's complicated plot deliberately evokes nineteenth-century precursors, but its characters are too vividly drawn to come off simply as figures of period pastiche. Despite an occasional stylistic anachronism, the novel is, like New York itself, satisfyingly dense and complex, and it reserves judgment about whether American optimism is ultimately a blessing or a curse.

Company Man, *by Joseph Finder (St. Martin's; $24.95).* Finder sets his sixth novel in a small town in Michigan, a place where nothing appears to be going well for anyone. The Stratton Corporation, which makes premium office furniture, has laid off half its workforce, and thousands of ex-employees are furious with the company's C.E.O., Nick Conover; one of them seems to be stalking him. The story alternates between Conover's perspective and that of an intensely religious policewoman. Finder skillfully places his story of corporate intrigue (who is trying to sell the company, and why?) in counterpoint to the unravelling of a family's secrets (why is Nick's son Lucas so disturbed?), and the plot, which also features rogue cops and at least one homicide, accelerates to a headlong finish. Along the way, we receive expert instruction in the technology of home-security devices, the perils of offshoring, and the attractions of Hawaii.

A Great Improvisation, *by Stacy Schiff (Henry Holt; $30).* Yet another book on Benjamin Franklin would seem to be the last thing that anyone needs to cut down trees for right now, but this meticulously researched account captures a key moment in his history, and in ours, with verve, élan, and wit. Schiff concentrates on the years from 1776 to 1783, when, as the American commissioner in Paris, Franklin was charged with the tricky task of securing the support of monarchist France for a republican revolution. Schiff's Franklin is at once diplomat and flirt, scientist and intriguer. She shows him, above all, as a man of immense resourcefulness who mixed an idiosyncratic cocktail of courage and cynical manipulation for the highest of national, and intellectual, ends.

The Battle Over Hetch Hetchy, *by Robert W. Righter (Oxford; $30).* From 1901 to 1913, John Muir and the newly formed Sierra Club fought against the construction of a giant dam that would flood the majestic Hetch Hetchy Valley, in Yosemite National Park, and, in the process, built the first nationwide environmental movement. The burgeoning city of San Francisco saw the dam as a solution to its chronic water problems (surrounded on three sides by salt water, it obtained all its fresh water from a monopoly) and as a way to generate cheap electricity. The environmentalists eventually lost the battle, but Hetch Hetchy became the rallying cry for many future victories, including the passing of the National Parks Act, in 1916. Muir's opponents could display a hysterical anthropomorphism—one said, "The mountains are our enemies"—but Righter's approach is unfailingly evenhanded and illuminates how the opposing ideologies formed in the Hetch Hetchy fight became the source of future environmental debates.

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BOOKS

JOHN BROWN'S BODY

A new biography restores Brown's centrality to the Civil War.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

"Weird John Brown," Melville called him, in a weirdly contemporary locution, and for a long time he was shuffled to the edges of American weirdness, among the staring-mad homicidal nuts and assassins. In the past several years, though, history, or at least some historians, has become kinder, and even reverent. Long before he led the botched and bloody anti-slavery raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859, Brown, we are taught, was a moral visionary and a man of uncanny courage and integrity. Every one of his central moral convictions and most of his peripheral ones, too, have been vindicated by history. He was a dedicated feminist, who had his sons do the housework on terms of equality with his daughters; he was a farmer who had gentle and respectful relations with neighboring Native Americans, so that, even before he became famous as the fighting fury of abolition, they liked and respected him. Above all, he was convinced, throughout the eighteen-forties and fifties—a time when even most abolitionists were prepared to wring their hands and tolerate slavery if it could be limited in scale—that the practice of holding men, women, and children as property was an absolute evil, that it had, at all costs, to end, and that the race who had been enslaved were not merely to be pitied but to be respected and armed, as citizens and fellow-soldiers. Far from being an incoherent fanatic, he was an eloquent speaker and writer, who composed an entire alternative Constitution, one reflecting egalitarian values that did not become commonplace until our own time.

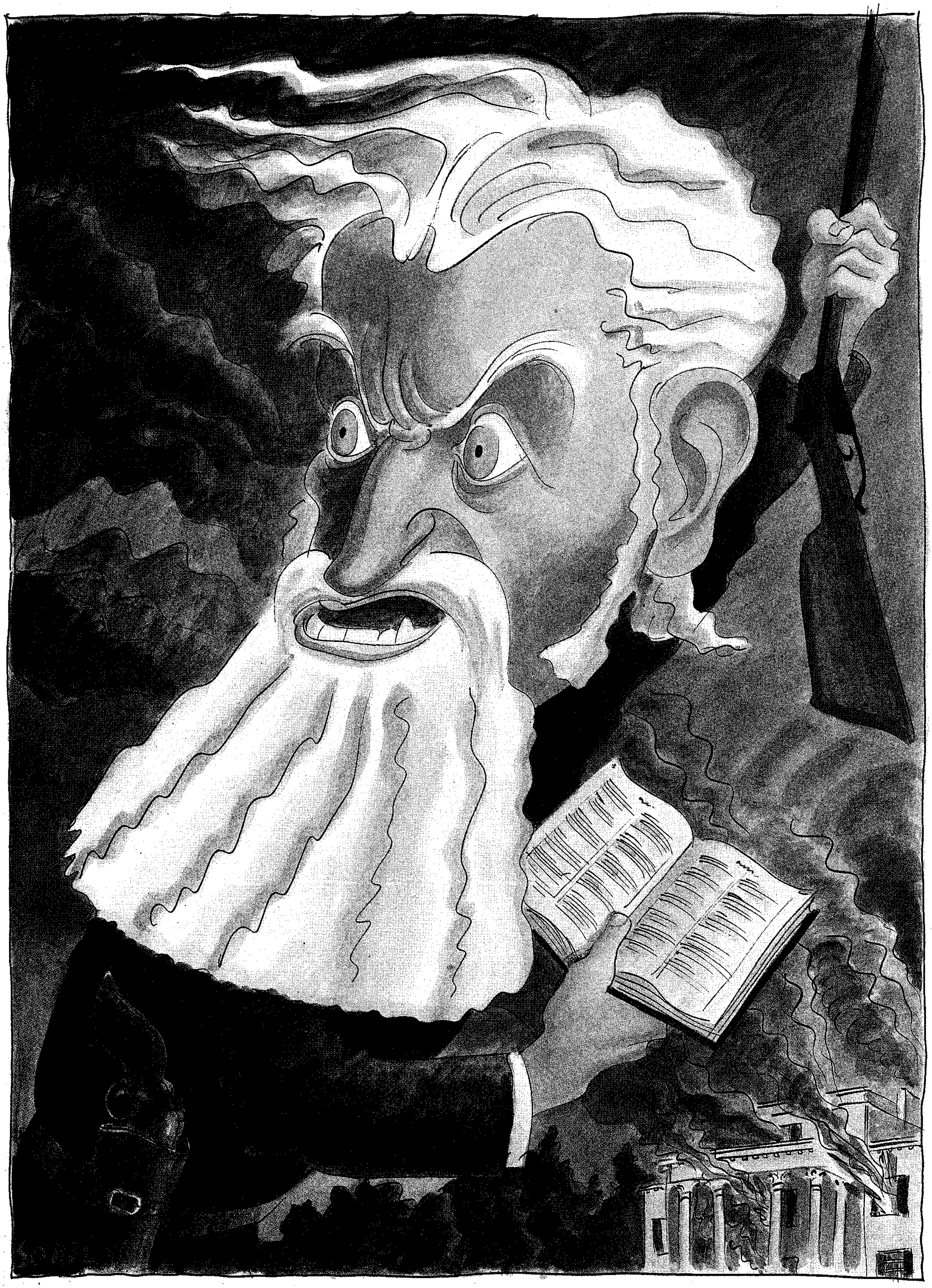
He was also, as even an admiring historian cannot deny, a man of violence and, by almost any definition, what we would now call a terrorist—a man who believed that the government of the United States should be met with violence because it supported and perpetuated oppression. He believed that there were no distinctions to be made between innocent and guilty in a society determined to perpetuate an evil. "It is better that a whole generation of men, women, and children should pass away by a violent death" than that slavery should live, he declared. He led his sons out into the fields of Kansas at night to massacre unarmed men while their families listened, and insisted afterward that he had been right to do it: that where legislation and compromise had failed only violence would succeed. He is the man who made Lincoln possible, and the acknowledged spiritual patron of Timothy McVeigh.

Russell Banks's fine novel "Cloudsplitter" (1998) helped reimagine Brown for our time as a flawed hero, and it was followed by the Harvard scholar John Stauffer's "The Black Hearts of Men" (2002), which reëstablished Brown as a serious political thinker, and, last year, by Franny Nudelman's "John Brown's Body," which explained the enormous role of Brown's martyrdom in the visual and literary rhetoric of the Civil War. In a different, sharper key, George MacDonald Fraser devoted his 1994 "Flashman" novel, "Flashman and the Angel of the Lord," to an account of Harry's involvement with Brown and Harpers Ferry, and produced what is, for the Flashman series, a surprisingly admiring portrait. Now we have a full-fledged five-hundred-page biography: "John Brown, Abolitionist," by David S. Reynolds (Knopf; $35). Reynolds's book is a defense of Brown, whom he, too, believes to have been slighted by a history written by the winners with an eye to consoling the losers. He sees Brown as a visionary prophet of American equality, whose sins and crimes, though real, have to be situated in the bloody context of the run-up to the Civil War.

Mainly, he wants to restore Brown's centrality to the Civil War, and he does. By writing John Brown out as an oddity or sideshow, he insists, we miss the essential reality of the war: what was unthinkable and extremist in 1859—the armed descent of the North on the South to end slavery—had by 1864 become a mass movement, so that the war could be understood as what Lincoln called "a John Brown raid, on a gigantic scale." Brown is the first mover in the American tragedy, the man who struck the bell and struck it hard. Reynolds's book isn't beautifully written, and his defense of Brown can be uncomfortably apologetic, but almost every page forces you to think hard, and in new ways, about American violence, American history, and what used to be called the American character.

John Brown was born with his century, in Torrington, Connecticut. His father, Owen Brown, was a Yankee tanner, and a hard, cold Calvinist of the very old American school. William T. Vollmann, in his dense study of the types of violence, "Rising Up and Rising Down," tries to place Brown within a general practice of personal violence and expiation through discipline. Brown's father, a man of rectitude, beat him regularly, and Brown, in turn, beat his children, making them strike their father as often as their father struck them, but surely this kind of punishment was common in the brutal domestic life of the time. Nor is young Brown's subsequent history of failed careers, in tanning and farming and real-estate speculation, quite as unusual for the pre-Civil War period as some have tried to make it, in an effort to create an aura of embittered resentment around the man. A figure as different as John James Audubon went up the same Calvary of failed minor capitalisms before he found himself.

Brown was unusual, perhaps, in his fecundity—he eventually had twenty children by two wives, the first of whom died, predictably, of childbed fever—and in his passionate devotion to his family; he seems to have been so ideal a father that three of his sons followed him to their deaths in his crusades. (Perhaps even more extraordinary, the sons who didn't want to join him he treated tenderly.) In his own time, he gave off a sense of being a man of some other, a throwback. With a classic American Puritan's addiction to Scripture, he was more a man of the Old Testament than the New, a prophet and avenger, a Joshua rather than a Jesus. He had a particularly bad case of the old New England identification of the Puritans with the Jews, as the armed and chosen people. (Brown was, in his broad-mindedness,



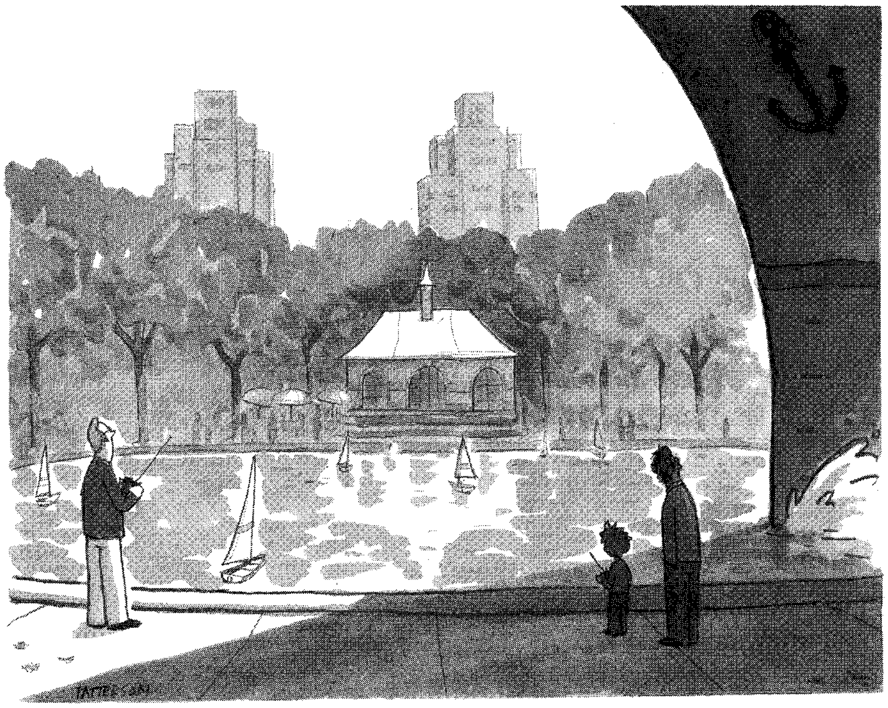
Brown was more a man of the Old Testament than the New, a prophet and avenger, a Joshua rather than a Jesus.

philo-Semitic.) But he was also a resolute roundhead, an admirer of Oliver Cromwell, and one of Reynolds's accomplishments is to help us see how the figure of Cromwell—the common man who read his Bible, and who killed a king—haunted the period and Brown's actions.

What's still difficult to explain about Brown is just why he turned so hard against slavery. His father was an anti-slavery zealot, though not an activist, but the son absorbed the creed of abolition with an intensity and a sense of personal wrong that were unequalled among the white men of his time. The legend has Brown, at the age of twelve, seeing a slave boy being beaten, and swearing, then and there, to "declare, *or Swear: Eternal War* with Slavery." True or not, the story has two elements that are typical of Brown's passionate form of abolition: it was intensely personal, and it involved an empathy, rather than patronizing sympathy, with the sufferings of black people.

Brown turned to radical abolitionism, and to violence, only in the eighteen-thirties. In retrospect, it is the great dividing decade, as crucial as the nineteen-sixties in the next century. As the essayist John Jay Chapman observed in 1913, "Between 1830 and 1835, the element of passion was rising past the danger point, and running into something like insanity in the Southern mind." The decade began with Nat Turner's slave revolt, and its brutal suppression, and so it also marked the moment when the generally benevolent Jeffersonian view of slavery—an evil that would pass with the development of the region—became replaced in the South by various nascent forms of ideological racism: blacks were not an unlucky race, not yet quite ready for emancipation, but a subhuman one, whose only hope for salvation lay in being kept in slave labor; the evil would never pass, because it wasn't an evil. The new, openly racist ideology produced an uncompromising form of abolitionism in the North, under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, the white Martin Luther King, Jr., whose great words of 1829 opened the decade: "Before God I must say that such a glaring contradiction as exists between our creed and practice, the annals of six thousand years cannot parallel. In view of it, I am ashamed of my country."

But Garrison, like Dr. King, was a pacifist, and, right up to the moment when the war broke out, he had no really practical plan for ending slavery, aside from "separation" (i.e., the decoupling of the North from the South) and moral suasion. John Brown's insight, from the beginning, was that slavery would end only if someone ended it. Sometime in the eighteen-forties, he had conceived a plan to create an army of emancipation in the South, which would hide in the mountains and grow by leaps and defections until the institution of slavery ultimately collapsed. Apart from the grandiosity of his long-range scheme, Brown differed from the mainstream of Northern abolitionism in his peculiar affinity with the South—both with the blacks he wanted to help liberate and with the slaveholders he wanted to destroy. Where Garrison, though utterly passionate and courageous in his denunciations, was a thorough man of the North, with lawyerly-journalistic gifts of argument and irony, Brown was a man of romantic feeling. Stauffer's book documents Brown's deep sense of identification with and admiration for black culture. In a way that did not recur in American life until the radicals of the nineteen-sixties stood in awe of H. Rap Brown, he wanted to be black—to *look* black and *think* black and act black. (He may even have had his skin darkened in photographs to try to pass, in the opposite direction.)



At the same time, Brown—along with certain radical characters of the black abolitionist movement—shared with the slave*owners* a romantic ideology of personal honor through violence. "Our white brethren cannot understand us unless we speak to them in their own language; they recognize only force," Brown's friend the black radical James McCune Smith wrote, using words that no Garrisonian abolitionist would have trusted but which Brown grasped and admired. "They will never recognize our manhood until we knock them down a time or two; they will then hug us as men and brethren."

One need only compare Brown's attitudes with those of the other key voices of the decade to see how important this difference was. Abraham Lincoln, in the eighteen-thirties, was grappling with the same realities—the explosions of violence centered on the anti-slavery disputes—but, in his first important speech, to the Springfield Young Men's Lyceum in 1838, he took a radical position against the Southern cult of honor and redemption through violence. Lincoln insisted that salvation for America lay only in extreme proceduralism: "Passion has helped us, but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense."

It is hard now to grasp the cultural authority that the code of passionate honor—with its elaborate rituals of feuds and duels—seemed to give the South in that period. Not merely the political edge but the poetic priority seemed to lie with the feudal and honorable South against the commercial and mouthy North. (It was a cultural advantage that persisted right up through, and perhaps beyond, the Atlanta première of "Gone with the Wind.") Brown, though, understood it because he felt it. He set out, in effect, not to convert the South to Northern values but to convert the Northern abolitionists to the Southern codes of honorable violence. He was a virus that was to prove deadly to the Old South, because at some deep level he shared its DNA: its assumptions, its literature, and even some of its values—particularly the value of dying heroically for a cause over living honorably for one, and the companion value of forcing other people to die heroically for their cause, whether they quite wanted to or not.

Brown's acceptance of this feudal ethic forms the general background to his murderous night in Kansas on May 24, 1856. Brown was brought to Kansas by his sons, who had learned their father's creed by heart. "We must show by actual work that there are two sides to this thing and that they can not go on with this impunity," Brown declared, after watching his fellow-abolitionists quake and tremble in the face of violent pro-slave mobs. He assembled a party of activists, including four of his sons and a son-in-law, armed them with swords, and marched them toward the little settlement of Pottawatomie Creek. Brown had his men bang on the doors of pro-slavery households, pretending to be lost travellers in order to get the men outside. There he ordered them cut to pieces, watching impassively as his sons and other followers did the work. (He seems to have executed one man, James Doyle, himself.) Five men were murdered in this manner.

Reynolds, without wanting to excuse it, goes to great lengths to set the Pottawatomie massacre in its context—pro-slavery thugs had been routinely beating and intimidating and killing anti-slavery activists, and, until then, the anti-slavery side had seemed too timid or frightened to defend itself. Yet Brown's motives for this act remain murky. The psychiatrist James Gilligan has argued that acts of violence are always rooted in feelings of shame and humiliation that can be expiated only by the destruction of someone who was a witness, in some sense, to one's shame. Brown in Kansas at first might seem to be without this cue to action—he was neither implicated nor particularly humiliated by the vigilantes—until one realizes that the real trigger was something that had happened two days before in Washington. There, as Reynolds reminds us, a South Carolina congressman had beaten Senator Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, nearly to death with the gold head of his cane for daring to speak out against the pro-slavery forces in Kansas and, in a feudal manner, for criticizing a kinsman of his. Sumner, though no pacifist, had been unable to defend himself. (His feet seem to have got caught under his little desk.)

This assault was put forward, instantly, as crowning proof of the difference between the Southern honor culture and the Northern procedural one; a Northerner could talk trash, but he couldn't stand up for himself. Brown, one of his sons said, "went crazy—*crazy*. It seemed to be the finishing, decisive touch." It was not a cool evaluation of the potential uses of violence in Kansas but the transferred sense of humiliation that he felt on behalf of Sumner that drove Brown crazy and into the massacre.

Brown emerged from the massacre not bloodstained but magnified in the eyes of his enemies. Before, the anti-slavery forces had had only contempt for the abolitionists. Now they were scared to death of John Brown. He was able to win a minor skirmish with government forces who were out to get him simply through the fear his name invoked.

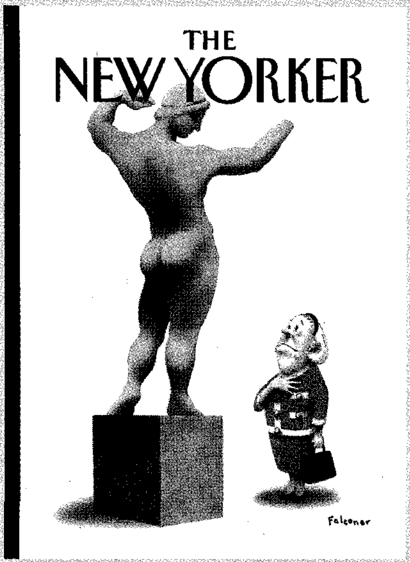
Brown did not claim particular glory for the Pottawatomie massacre but he did not cover it up, either. What makes him a typically American idealist is not his lust for killing—he was eager to avoid murder if he could—but his indifference to human life lost on the way toward his ideal. Like our current idealists in power, he didn't want to kill, but he didn't want to count the dead he did kill, either. He shrugged off the dead men in the dirt, even as one of his sons went mad at the memory.

Brown was never arrested or tried for the Kansas killings, and when he came back East he found himself a hero—though not with the members of Garrison's abolitionist "establishment," who were firmly pacifist and consumed by their own sectarian squabbling. Instead, it was the high Transcendentalists, Thoreau and Emerson and Alcott first among them, who became Brown's fervent admirers and propagandists. Some of Reynolds's most illuminating pages are devoted to Brown's relationship to the Transcendentalists. The historical cliché has been that the Transcendentalists had their heads too far up in the clouds to see what was happening on the bloody earth below. Reynolds, however, following Stauffer, establishes that they were Brown's most important intellectual allies.

In a way, it was an early instance of radical chic: the Transcendentalists preferred a real man to a squabbling set of Mrs. Jellybys. But there was more to it. They shared a disdain for materialist Northern society—which Brown had bankrupted himself out of, and which the Transcendentalists viewed largely with baffled dismay. Whatever else Brown might be, he was not a trivial man, or a worldly one: he was not a merchant with a Sunday cause. He was a free man already in a state of liberty. In a way that recalls the idealization of Jean Genet by the French existentialists, it was his own freedom from constraints, as much as his urge to break the shackles of others, that drew the Transcendentalists to him.

He received the backing of a group of wealthy abolitionists who called themselves the Secret Six, though a less secret secret group is hard to imagine. They included Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the man who was later Emily Dickinson's patron. (Reynolds has some fascinating speculative pages on traces of Brown's life in Dickinson's poetry, one essentially fanatic American imagination speaking to another.) From that time on, Brown was devoted to fund-raising and recruiting for his Southern invasion plan, which soon centered on the Federal Arsenal at Harpers Ferry. The plan was hardly well concealed; at some point, it was placed in the hands, through an anonymous letter, of the Secretary of War, John B. Floyd, who, in the great tradition of American counter-terrorism, shrugged and threw it aside.

Brown brought in the black abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass, who took a look at the plan and refused to have anything to do with it, since it was obviously a blueprint for failure and the mass executions of blacks. The plan was, to say the least, quixotic: Brown would descend with a handpicked raiding party, take weapons from the arsenal, arm the



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slaves of Harpers Ferry—with *pikes*, in a deliberately archaic and Cromwellian touch—and then take to the Appalachian Mountains to begin a permanent guerrilla insurrection, fed by regular recruitments of escaped slaves.

At one level, it was not nearly so crazy as it looked: a slave insurrection had succeeded in Haiti almost within living memory, and Brown's plan remained a successful model for Latin-American guerrillas into our own time, right down to the mélange of outside agitators and local agrarian rebels. At another level, though, it was even crazier than it sounded: Brown, as Douglass recognized, had done no serious advance work with the local slaves, and the blacks of Northern Virginia (what we would now call West Virginia) were, generally, not the kind of plantation slaves who were likely to rebel but house and field servants, who could not be expected to bond with an unknown white man with a flowing beard who handed them a pike and told them to kill somebody and run for the hills.

For two years, Brown went on planning, buying guns and pikes, feuding with a proposed second-in-command, and travelling to Canada to form a provisional government, with a black President and Vice-President. He drew up a multiracial Constitution made for a post-Harpers Ferry America—a Constitution meant for "the proscribed and oppressed races of the United States . . . together with all minor children of such persons." (It included an article against "filthy conversation.") Reading through accounts of life on the Brown farm, in upstate New York, where all this was centered, you think, They weren't serious. But they were. On October 16, 1859, Brown, two of his sons, and eighteen colleagues, white and black, descended on Harpers Ferry and took hostage about thirty-five people who happened to be near the arsenal (and all of whom he treated with great consideration). They shot a couple of bystanders—including a freed black and the generally well-liked mayor of the town. The slaves were armed and then, for the most part, looked around wondering what to do.

There was a moment when the operation might have been salvaged, if Brown had moved quickly and headed for the mountains with the few slaves who had joined him. Instead, petulantly disappointed that the great slave uprising hadn't begun instantly upon his arrival, he sent out for breakfast for his hostages and barricaded himself inside. By the following night, the arsenal had been surrounded by federal troops—led, with almost unbelievable serendipity, by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee, then of the U.S. Army, and his lieutenant, J.E.B. Stuart—and several of Brown's men had been killed, including his son Oliver. Brown still refused to surrender, the federals rushed the arsenal, and Brown was stabbed in the side and slashed around the head.

It was what happened immediately afterward that made Brown's reputation as a martyr and prophet. Transported to the arsenal guardhouse, Brown, bleeding from his head wound, calmly faced down his captors through the next twenty-four hours, arguing his case and, on the whole, shaming what remained of their moral conscience. With the insouciant openness that was until quite recently a feature of American life—Oswald, let's recall, gave a press conference on the night of the Kennedy assassination—dignitaries and reporters and even artists for publications, North and South, rushed in to interview him. The governor of Virginia, Henry A. Wise, sat in, as did Lee and Stuart.

Horribly wounded, expected to die, his son dead alongside him, Brown kept his cool and his words. He observed that he could have fled but didn't out of concern for his hostages. ("I had thirty odd prisoners, whose wives and daughters were in tears for their safety, and I felt for them.") Pressed on the great question, he said, simply, "I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong to God and against humanity—I say it without wishing to be offensive—and I believe it would be perfectly right to interfere with you, so far as to free those you wickedly and willfully hold in bondage." When Jeb Stuart warned, sententiously, "The wages of sin is death," Brown turned on him: "I would not have said that if you had been a prisoner and wounded in my hands." And then he spoke plain truth: "You had better—all of you people of the South—prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question. You may dispose of me very easily—I am nearly disposed of now. But this question is still to be settled."

And they listened, recognizing the dignity and courage of the old man who was speaking. Governor Wise went back to Richmond and called him "a bundle of the best nerves I ever saw, cut and thrust and bleeding and in bonds. He is a man of clear head, of courage, fortitude, and simple ingenuousness. He is cool, collected, and indomitable . . . fanatic, vain, and garrulous, but firm, truthful, and intelligent." Another pro-slavery politician called him "as brave and resolute a man as ever headed an insurrection, and, in a good cause, and with a sufficient force, would have been a consummate partisan commander." It was, as Reynolds says, praise for a Southern gentleman, coming from others.

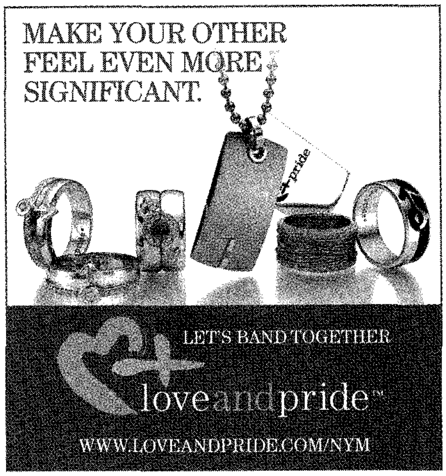
Brown triumphed rhetorically and, in the end, effectively at Harpers Ferry, because the slaveholder's code of honor, though in many ways a scandal, was not entirely a sham. His enemies were not demons, though they served a cause in many ways demonic. They did not treat him as subhuman; they did not torture him to death instantly, or lynch him, as they might well have done had he been black. They were impressed by his grasp of the code of honor, of courage in combat, and of fearlessness in the face of death and one's enemies, and they honored him accordingly. Even his trial, though "fixed" at some level, was open and offered at least the formalities of fairness.

Mark Twain understood how this worked better than anyone. He never tired of attacking the Sir Walter Scott-inspired honor cult of the South, and in the feud of the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons in "Huckleberry Finn" he gave memorable form to its nihilistic absurdity. But he also understood the moral force that the code gave to individuals: in the same novel, the moment when the solitary, aristocratic Colonel Sherburn faces down a lynch mob alone is, as Twain imagines it, a distinctly Southern scene. Even Garrison, a man of unexampled courage, could not face down a mob in Boston but had to be saved by the police.

And, in a last irony, it was the language that the slaveowners of the South used about John Brown that provided a template for the way the North, five years later, would talk about the defeated Stuart and Lee: brave and resolute insurrectionists, they should only have been leaders in a better cause. Brown's first night in captivity established the rhetorical terms on which those fighting the war would try to deal with the humanity of their enemies. Even the courage with which Brown went to his execution, on December 2nd, reinforced the code. The man who made the Northern cause an armed cause, he was, in a certain sense, the first casualty of the South.

Terrorism is an autoimmune disease; its purpose is to cause harm by provoking an overreaction. This is exactly what happened after Brown's failure. A rational Southern observer would have seen that the raid was a sign of the fundamental weakness of abolitionism as an armed cause and, with a bit of wisdom, would have seized the chance to do something before it became a stronger one. Of course, just the opposite happened: panic about slave revolts and further abolitionist raids set in throughout the South. Even in distant Mississippi and far-off Georgia, the paranoia became rampant, and, Reynolds shows, it was this atmosphere of panic and paranoia, along with the election of the still ostensibly anti-abolitionist Lincoln, that produced secession and, with it, the arming of the North and the war.

Was there any other way to "settle the question"? Absent a credible plan originating anywhere in the South for black emancipation on any terms at all—even on a delayed basis that admitted the obscene right of property—there probably wasn't. One anti-Brown argument, repeated even today, was that slavery was on its way out and would have ended in any case, under the sheer historical inexorability of commercial change, industrialization, the impossibility of maintaining a slave system in a fully capitalist economy, and so on. But nothing in history is less inexorable than the inexorable forces of history. Systems inherently rotten and unsustainable can go on for millennia (witness the last few hundred years of the Ottoman Empire). The reassurance that in the long run slavery would have ended by itself puts one in mind of the famous voice-over in Stanley Kubrick's "Spartacus," where, despite the crucifixion of Kirk Douglas and his followers, we are told that Spartacus' revolt signalled the beginning of the end of slavery—with only an aside to remind us that it would take another two thousand years. In the very long run, even the best moral arguments get their force from the readiness of men to kill and die for them. That the very long run can sometimes become much shorter than anyone had ever imagined is one more message from John Brown's ghost. ♦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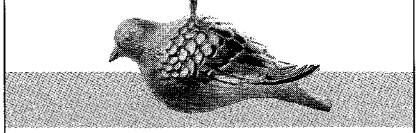
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

IN TRANSLATION

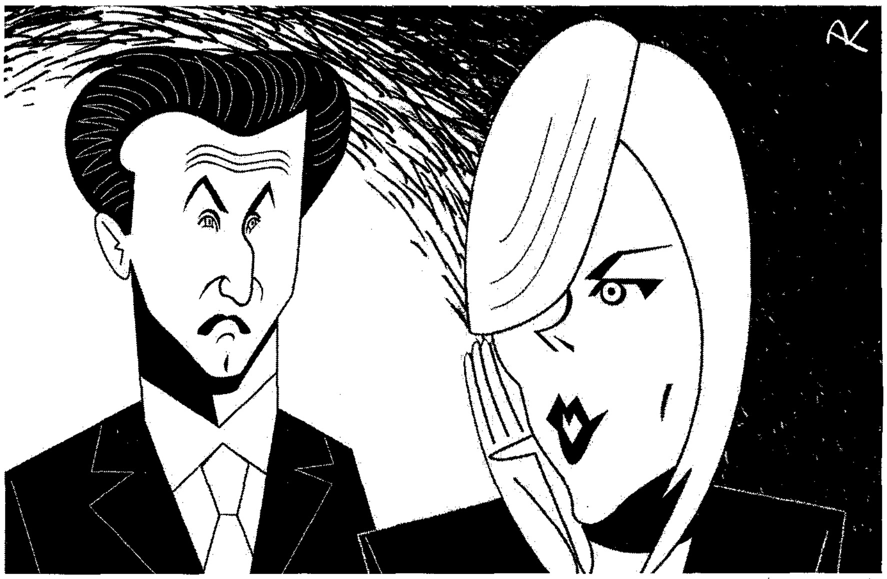
"The Interpreter" and "The Best of Youth."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Sydney Pollack film, "The Interpreter," stars Nicole Kidman as Silvia Broome, an employee of the United Nations. Lonely and multilingual, Silvia bears a heavy responsibility: she sits in a booth and translates simultaneously from one tongue to another, fully aware that global war may be triggered if she leaves one of her participles dangling in midair. One night, returning to the booth to pick up her stuff, she overhears a conversation that hints at a dastardly crime. So is her life now in danger? Is she a plant, a threat, or a clue?

The crime in question is the possible slaying of Edmond Zuwanie (Earl Cameron), the president of Matobo—a fictitious African republic, conjured solely for the purposes of this film, although you could be forgiven for allowing the words Zimbabwe and Mugabe, say, to flit across your brain. Zuwanie, once a liberator of his people, has become their scourge, and there are many interested parties who wish him ill. There is even a move to have him indicted for crimes against humanity. Nevertheless, he remains a grizzled head of state, he will shortly arrive at the U.N. to address the General Assembly, and it is the job of the Secret Service—in particular, of Agents Keller (Sean Penn) and Woods (Catherine Keener)—to protect the genocidal gentleman while he is visiting New York. One presumes that, for Dr. Zuwanie, the quandary is simple: do I feel more safe or less safe in the knowledge that I am being tended by Sean Penn?

What lends "The Interpreter" its peculiar froideur is the presence of two such baffled players in the leading roles. Kidman is an icicle, damned if she's going to melt for anybody, while Penn wears the look of a man who has had enough. All that remains is a series of motions to be gone through, which may explain the dour precision with which he performs his professional task—comically unattracted, at the start, to the statuesque Ms. Broome. He learns that she was raised in Africa (at mournful moments, she still plays a wooden flute), that she knows Matobo well, and that her parents and sister were killed there by a land mine, which could well have turned her into a foe of the Zuwanie regime. As Keller investigates, he draws near, but a hug is as close as he gets; if George Clooney, the human catnip, couldn't even grab a kiss off Kidman in "The Peacemaker," then poor old Penn doesn't stand a chance.



Sean Penn and Nicole Kidman in Sydney Pollack's new movie.

"The Interpreter" was devised by a mass movement of contributors: screenplay by Charles Randolph, Scott Frank, and Steven Zaillian, from a story by Martin Stellman and Brian Ward, from an original idea by Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, and so forth. Together, they get down to some serious broth-spoiling, adding sprinkles of subplot whether we like the taste or not. Our first sight of Keller finds him removing his wedding ring; soon afterward, we learn that his wife has not merely left him but died in a car crash, with her lover. Penn is too good an actor, too naturally perturbed, to need this weight of backstory, and the fact that he's still humping it around at the climax, maundering on about grief while there are guns being pointed, pitches the whole thing head first into the risible. I actually felt sorry for Dr. Zuwanie, who looks as if he would rather get blown away than sit through another minute of someone else's therapy.

Such, unfortunately, is the pitfall for thrillers that aim to be more literate and grownup than the usual fare: they sometimes forget to thrill. There are patches of slow murk in "The Interpreter" that cry out for a cleaner edit, and—a big surprise, given that the crew gained unprecedented access from Kofi Annan's officials—we get a disappointingly slim grasp of U.N. life. I can tell you no more now about the layout of the place, or of how interpreters measure out their days, than I could before watching the movie. I hate to say it, but the single U.N. scene in "North by Northwest," for which Hitchcock had to use mockups, delivers a more colorful punch than Pollack's respectful panoramas of the General Assembly. Still, to be fair, there is one part of "The Interpreter" that would, without question, have earned the Master's smile. All the characters are in different places—one agent is following Silvia, another is tailing a Matoban suspect, and Woods and Keller are in a booby-trapped room. (Catherine Keener, by far the driest deliverer of lines in the movie, looks up at an overhead light strung with ex-

ROBERT RISKO

plosives and says, "Now, that's just *rude*." Imagine Celeste Holm packing heat, and you're there.) Gradually, Pollack pulls the figures together, Keller starts to yell into his phone, and calamity opens its maw. It is one of the smartest passages of action, allegro sostenuto, that I have seen for a long while—as neat, indeed, as the infamous bomb-on-a-bus sequence from Hitchcock's "Sabotage," and true to his faith in the revelatory powers of excitement, in what it means to have movies burst against our nerves. "The Interpreter" is long and tangled, the score is yet another drownout from the thundering James Newton Howard, and the avowed thoughtfulness—about sub-Saharan politics, about the clashing commitments to peace and justice, about the kinship of damaged souls—is at once laudable and vaporous. I thought harder, and more fierily, about Silvia Broome not as she tootled a desert air on her Matoban flute but as she ran for her life from a crowded Brooklyn bus. That is the lingua franca of film, and it needs no translation.

This is how people find love in "The Best of Youth." They meet in a small kitchen, where one of them calls the other a klutz for not being able to work the coffee machine. They talk about college, and exchange a look. That's it. And this is how people make out: they fumble warmly in a car, beside a phone booth, with no music surging to their aid—unless you count the Roman rain outside, with its soft percussive beat.

All of which confirms that we are in the midst of verifiable human conduct. "The Best of Youth" runs, though never dawdles, for an easy six hours, with barely a false note. Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana, it was commissioned by Italian television; here it has already shown at Film Forum, in two three-hour chunks, and will play at Cinema Village before heading elsewhere across the country. There is absolutely no reason not to sacrifice a couple of your evenings for the sake of the Caratis, the lightly bound clan at the heart of Giordana's epic—not, I should add, because they will offer you a pulsing escape from your own family life but precisely because the rhythm of their pleasures and scarrings will, over time, come to seem like a consoling echo of your own. When a movie starts, as this one does, with a dad interrupting his son's homework and asking if he can help move a TV set, you know you are on home ground.

The story starts in Rome, in 1966, and ends more than thirty years later, although one can imagine it drifting on, unregarded, past the ending of the film. As in any saga, the major events keep poking in at the sides, but what is most impressive is the resilience—the indifference, sometimes—with which the Caratis bounce and glance off the issues of the day. There are four children, but two of them reside at center stage: Nicola (Luigi Lo Cascio), who grows up to be a psychiatrist, and Matteo (Alessio Boni), who, insofar as he grows up at all, becomes a cop. At one point, the two brothers meet in the muddy detritus of 1966, as the Arno breaks its banks in Florence, yet the focus of the scene is not the enormity of the disaster but the front page of an illuminated manuscript that Nicola finds floating in a library vault. Even when he and his girlfriend, Giulia (Sonia Bergamasco), take refuge during student riots in Turin, the camera pauses to inspect the tranquil courtyard into which they have breathlessly fled.

The intoxication of '68 goes to Giulia's head and never leaves; she moves in with Nicola, then walks out in favor of the Red Brigades and revolutionary terrorism. The coincidences here, you could argue, turn a little too cute, with Matteo arriving at his office to see Giulia's mug shot on the wall; or, equally, as she herself finds that Carlo Tommasi (Fabrizio Gifuni), a banker who married the younger Carati daughter, is slated to be one of her next victims. But these niceties dissolve over time, and the skill with which Giordana plays political mania against what you might call respectable half-heartedness, the tacit desire to live well against the urge to ignite the lives of others, suggests that he has been not only steeping himself in the Old Masters of Italian cinema (he has already made a documentary about Pasolini) but reading Stendhal on the side. "The Best of Youth" takes its chance—almost unheard of, these days—to bloom and unfurl like a novel, reaching for the kinds of repeated gesture, of memories sown and reaped among friends, that most directors are forced to shed along the way. Moreover, for anybody who still believes that every large, onscreen Italian family is ipso facto a branch of the Corleones, here is the unglamorous cure. Matteo does indeed bump into the Mafia, when he is posted to Palermo, but, as a sullen bunch of locals, including a child, stand and gaze at a corpse in a slaughterhouse, he shouts, "It's not a movie!" For a few enfolding hours, you believe him. ♦

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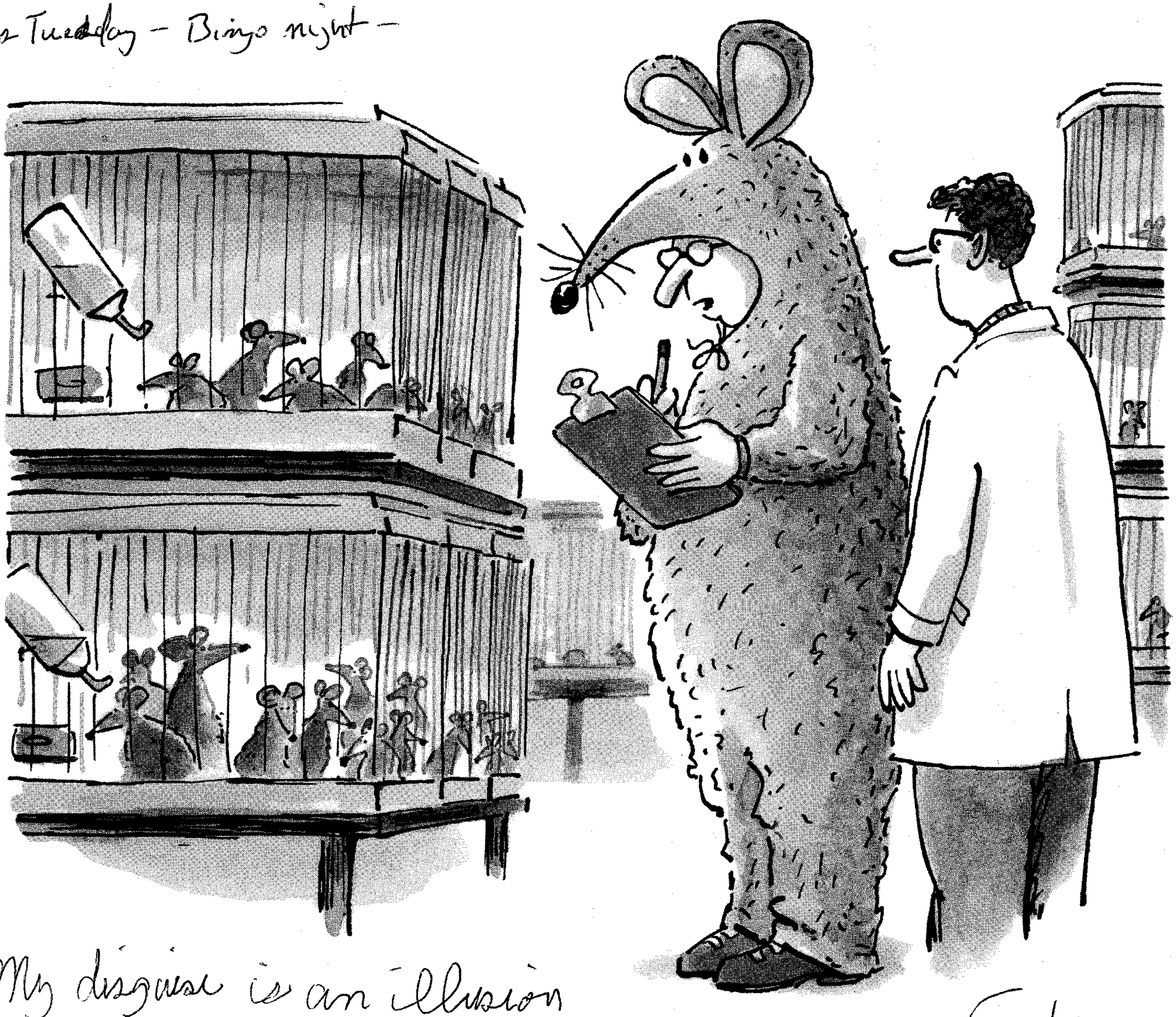

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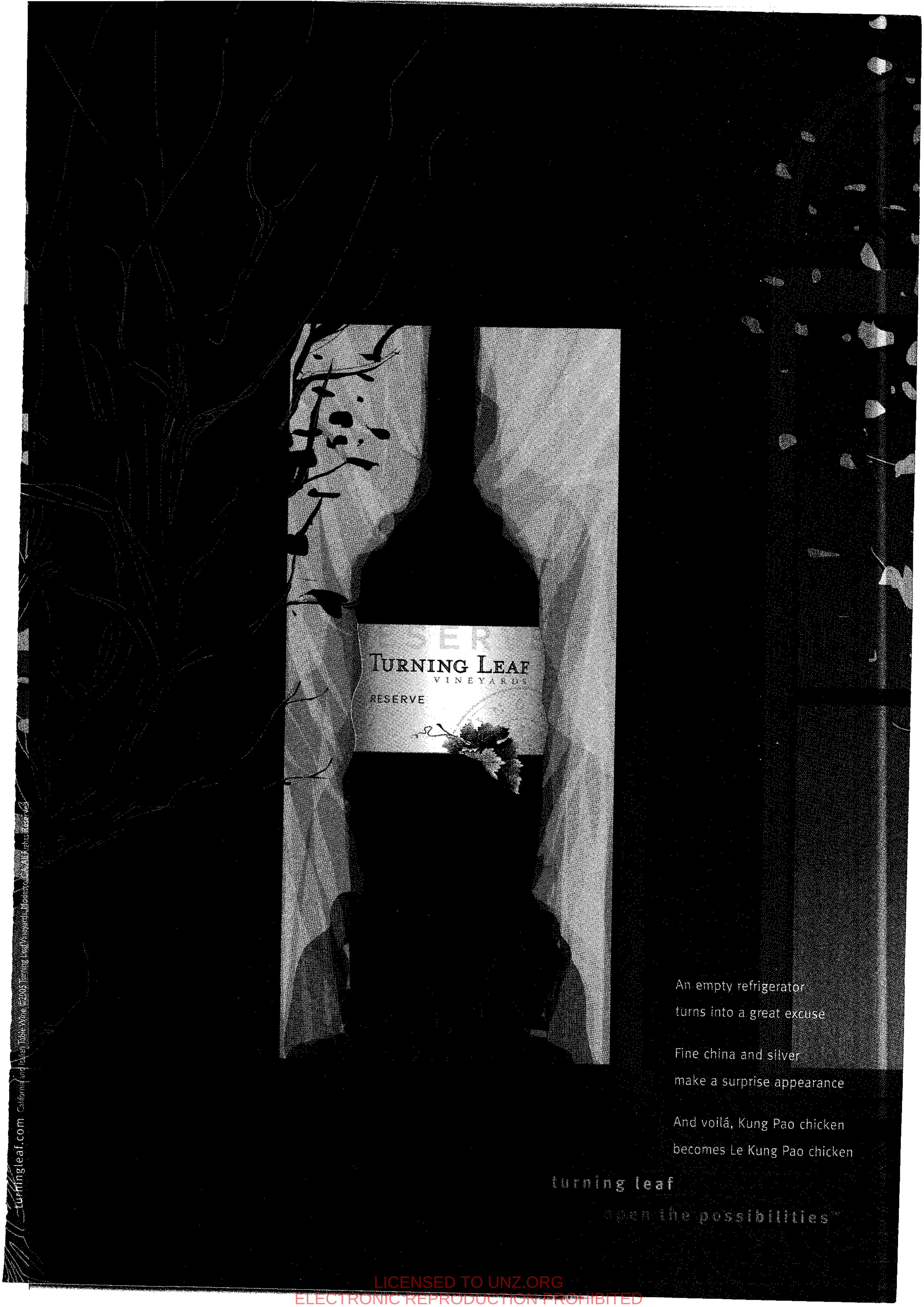

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